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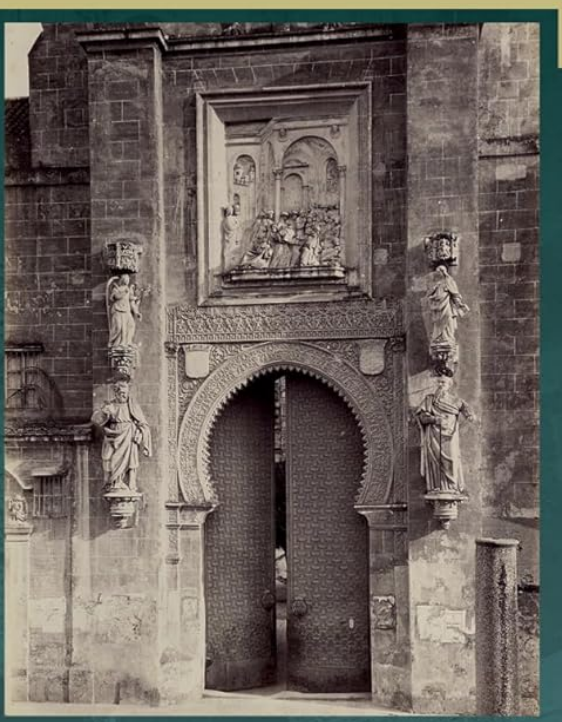

Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean

Rereading, Reshaping, Reusing Objects (10th-20th centuries)

Edited by
Beatrice Falcucci, Emanuele Giusti,
and Davide Trentacoste

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TRAVELLING MATTERS
ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN

HISTORIES IN MOTION

VOLUME 1

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BEATRICE FALCUCCI, EMANUELE GIUSTI,
AND DAVIDE TRENTACOSTE

Introduction

Rereading, Reshaping, Repurposing Objects in Motion across the Mediterranean

Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean focuses on the movement and transformation of objects taken as sources and subjects of the history of cross-cultural encounters in the Mediterranean. While the volume explores the Mediterranean as a space extending to the Atlantic, Northern Europe, the Indian and Pacific Oceans, it avoids narrow perspectives and overarching narratives associated with the study of one-way routes (e.g., North to South or East to West). Instead, objects are discussed in the context of their multidirectional flows, as they shape connections and encounters both at a local and global level over an extended chronology.

The essays collected in *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* cover a wide range of objects, including ceramics, textiles, doors, books, 'archaeological' artefacts, manuscripts, maps, devotional items, human remains, and relics. While originating in historically specific political and cultural settings, when their mobility is put to the fore objects can throw light on cross-cultural encounters and materialize a connected world. Objects can move by being bought, gifted, bartered, and sold, borrowed or stolen, collected and dispersed, just as they can be modified and destroyed in the process. As they move, objects can transfer knowledge, accumulate layers of meaning, develop

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forms of agency and become deeply entangled with emotions. Therefore, the volume underscores the materiality and mobility of objects, as well as the practices and knowledge intertwined with them, reconstructing how objects came to occupy a central position in a composite world of social and cultural interactions. This diversity is given coherence by focusing not only on phenomena of relational production between humans and non-humans or people and things, but also on specific instances of change within these relationships.

Objects embark on a new journey when their original function and previous life conclude. They begin to serve another purpose, giving rise to fresh connections. The Mediterranean region provides an exceptional vantage point for delving into these dynamics. Beyond being merely a body of water, the Mediterranean serves as a global crossroads and meeting point for three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. Throughout history, this basin has been the stage for highly complex polities, empires, and religions. It has borne witness to war and looting as well as trade and collaborative efforts in scientific advancement. To confine ourselves to the chronology covered by our volume, the Mediterranean witnessed the encounter of Byzantium and the Holy Roman Empire with their diverse cultures of power. While the Inquisition took root on its northern shores and Christian powers and the Ottoman Empire clashed on land and sea, knowledge traversed from one linguistic sphere to another, and material cultures of luxury spanned different but commensurable forms of sociability. On the threshold of the contemporary period, the sea itself came to embody different ideas of civilization, simultaneously anchored in the grand narratives of nation-states and rooted in the materiality of archaeology. In this incredibly rich context, objects in motion actively contributed to the transformation of cultures and societies as they underwent continuous repurposing and reinterpretation. These entanglements have left an extraordinary trail of traces — manifested in written references, descriptions, and the surviving objects themselves. Consider an Ottoman banner seized by Polish soldiers during the campaign to liberate Vienna from the Ottoman siege in 1683. It was transformed into an object of veneration in the Italian sanctuary of Loreto, its original purpose being relinquished as it assumed a new role with different significance.[1] According to a story recounted by the French orientalist Antoine Galland (1646–1715), a red satin cloth inscribed with the *shahada*, the Muslim declaration of faith — possibly a war banner as well — had been utilized for decades to cover the canopy during the processions of the Blessed Sacrament at Notre-Dame of Paris. Allegedly, a Maronite observer recognized the Arabic embroidery, restoring its former identity to this opulent piece of Catholic paraphernalia and triggering a

1 Guidetti, 'Reading Ottoman Banners'.

final transformation: its incineration.[2] A map of the Mediterranean Sea produced in 1579 by ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Sharafī of Sfax found itself displayed in the offices of the Italian Ministry of Colonies after the invasion of Libya and the Italo-Turkish war (1911–1912). Its presence was not valued for its geographical or artistic qualities but rather for its significance as a trophy.[3] These instances involve the reinterpretation, reshaping, and repurposing of objects, through which identities and cross-cultural relations evolve in a space that is both shared and conflicted. Objects, in fact, are characterized not just as *history-tellers* but as *history-makers*.

Given the extensive scope of this topic and the abundance of scholarly literature on it, the essays collected in this volume clearly do not attempt to present a comprehensive history of the Mediterranean or an exhaustive outline of the material cultures within it. Rather, they collectively highlight the heuristic potential of focusing on different instances of material and semantic transformation as embedded in the changing relationship between humans and objects. By conceptualizing the Mediterranean as both a barrier and a meeting space for diverse polities and communities, and as a unique backdrop for conflicted experiences of cultural, political, economic, and social transformation marked by instances of mobility and displacement, *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* draws upon the fundamental scholarly insights developed in the COST Action 'People in Motion' (PIMo). This scientific community's support and intellectual resources have proven invaluable in both intellectually and materially shaping the research project behind this volume. *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* aspires to make a distinctive contribution to the outstanding body of work produced by PIMo. It aims to offer a specific perspective on the significance of historically construed instances of connection: object repurposing.

Instances of object repurposing help shed light on the ambivalent nature of both homogeneity and fragmentation across the Mediterranean space since repurposing is both a function of connectivity — as it is deployed across frontiers and boundaries — and a function of difference and disruption — as it aims to adapt the object to a new context in several ways. Focusing on the reshaping and repurposing of objects enables us to engage with both the problem of human agency and the problem of diachronic change. However, this approach is most productive when it emphasizes both connections and disconnections at play within different cultural constellations, and when we keep in mind that such phenomena are relevant not only for their past existence but also for the traces they have left in the present. To further explore these topics, however, it is necessary to first delve deeper into three key aspects: the Mediterranean, objects, and their transformation.

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2 Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, pp. 1–3.

3 Nallino, 'Un mappamondo arabo'.

Connectivity and the Mediterranean Sea

Understanding objects as both mobile across different spaces and rooted in specific localities demands an appropriate historical and geographical framework. Therefore, while *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* assumes objects as the focus of its methodological approach, engaging with a Mediterranean perspective is equally important.

This importance has a political and ethical dimension that cannot be underestimated and should be addressed first and foremost. Even in recent times, the Mediterranean has been used as a silent backdrop to conflicts and divisions in popular yet academic narratives of history, which perpetuate the 'clash of civilization' hypothesis and favour the endurance of the essentialized perception of overarching human groups such as 'Christian Europe' and 'Islam'.[4] Furthermore, the last two decades have witnessed a growing perception of mobility in and around the Mediterranean as a problem or even as an existential threat for the societies of the northern shores of the sea. While it is historiographical common sense to reject such dichotomous readings of history as the 'clash of civilization' hypothesis, we should not underestimate the fundamental reason why the Mediterranean has long been a privileged object of analysis for historians: by setting the conditions for the creation of links between diverse economies, cultures, and religions, bodies of water such as the Mediterranean are capable of telling stories of exchange, communication, and coexistence as much as stories of conflict, violence, and division.[5] While the abuse of the Mediterranean's versatility as a repertoire of concepts and images of history has drawn much deserved criticism,[6] in this volume we will strive to strike a balance between these two interpretive poles by looking at the sea as both a bulwark and a passageway, keeping in mind that the Mediterranean should remain an 'essentially contested concept'[7] and that mobility of objects and people in and around it, be it forced or voluntary,

4 See for example Pagden, *Worlds at War*, pp. 512–38. The 'clash of civilization' hypothesis was first formulated by Arabist Bernard Lewis (1916–2018) in 1990 and then popularized by Harvard social scientist Samuel P. Huntington in a 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article, 'The Clash of Civilizations?'.

5 See e.g., Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*; Greene, *A Shared World*; Abulafia, *The Great Sea*; Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*; Fusaro and others, *Trade and Cultural Exchange*; Calafat, *Une mer jalousée*; Capasso and others, eds, *Il Mediterraneo come risorsa*; Tarantino and others, *Encounters at Sea*; Fogu, *The Fishing Net and the Spider Web*; Santus, *Il "turco" a Livorno*; Rakić and Capriotti, *Images in the Borderlands*; Fritz and von Wyss-Giacosa, eds, *Visual Reflections*.

6 Herzfeld, 'Practical Mediterraneanism'. On a specific but illuminating case of political abuse of the Mediterranean, see Shavit, 'The Mediterranean World', and Shavit, 'Mediterranean History'.

7 Horden, 'Mediterranean Excuses', p. 30.

is not a 'problem' to be resolved but a structural phenomenon to be factored in any historical analysis.[8]

Ideologically tinted readings of the Mediterranean, however, are variously connected to the grand debate that has been ongoing on the subject since the appearance of Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* in 1949. It is essential to delve a little into this debate in order to clarify where *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* stands methodologically. While we acknowledge the long tradition that harks back to Braudel's *magnum opus*, the volume depends more closely on a critical reception of recent debates revolving around both Braudel's long-lasting legacy and new contributions to the burgeoning field of 'Mediterranean Studies', by the likes of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's *Corrupting Sea* (2000).[9] The most relevant issues for our work concern the problem of agency, the question of connectivity as it relates to the issue of historiographical scale, and finally the aspect of diachronic change as a function of movement in space. Furthermore, it is also essential to discuss the boundaries of 'our' Mediterranean.

As is well known, Braudel outlined three levels of history in his large-scale depiction of life in the Mediterranean during the reign of King Philip II of Spain: the very long level of geology, climate, and geography, the middle level of society and culture, and the fleeting level of people and events. Since Braudel preferred the tempo that best suited his ideas about history in the *longue durée*, his perspective on the Mediterranean enabled him to go beyond the contingent moments of human history to identify patterns and consistencies, which in turn allowed him to assert the fundamental unity of the Mediterranean as a human environment and its exceptional character as a connector. Although Braudel oftentimes diverged from his quasi-celestial narrative to focus on close-ups that it is now tempting to refer to as microhistory, his work has been criticized for his deterministic tendency to throw the baby of human actors' agency out with the bathwater of *histoire événementielle*.[10] Our volume's focus on objects and the people that moved (with) them aims to follow in the footsteps of these criticisms by giving voice to the agency of people, space, and things. 'Multiplying the agency', as Cavan Concannon and Lindsay Mazurek put it by invoking one of Bruno Latour's watchwords, can be achieved not only by focusing on the faster tempo of society and people,

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8 Antunes and Blažitė, 'Mobility and Displacement'.

9 On Braudel's legacy see, in the extensive literature, Marino, 'The Exile and His Kingdom'; Horden, 'Mediterranean Excuses'; Fusaro, 'After Braudel'; the essay collected in Piterberg and others, eds, *Braudel Revisited*; Broodbank, *The Making of the Middle Sea*, pp. 18–25. On more recent trends, see the essay collected in Harris, *Rethinking the Mediterranean*; Zwierlein, 'Early Modern History', and Fiume and Ben-Yehoyada, 'A proposito di "A Companion to Mediterranean History"'.

10 On Braudel and 'microhistory' see e.g., Ginzburg, 'Microhistory', pp. 12–20; Fusaro, 'After Braudel', pp. 8–10; on the problem of human agency see e.g., Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, pp. xxiv–xxvii.

but also by adopting a multiscale perspective that facilitates the transition between the macro and the micro.[11]

This point also ties into one of the most debated aspects of recent Mediterranean studies: connectivity. In their monumental 2000 study, *The Corrupting Sea*, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell responded to Braudel's framework by attempting to define the Mediterranean as a coherent unit of research. Horden and Purcell devised a fourfold model of primary production that simultaneously served as an explanation and an interpretation of the Mediterranean as a unified historical reality. The key concept of this model was connectivity, which refers to the special logic of communication inherent in the extremely fragmented 'microregions' which constitute the Mediterranean. This connectivity, applicable to goods as well as to technology and ideas, allows the Mediterranean to exist by bridging very different polities and economies. As such, connectivity is presented as the defining trait of this space of exchange and circulation, which is unified precisely because of its diversity — a fascinating oxymoron.[12] However, Horden and Purcell define the exceptional character of the Mediterranean — or 'Mediterraneanness' — as a problem of degree rather than of kind, vis-à-vis other similar geographical and social constellations.[13] For this reason, we prefer not to engage in a discussion of what 'Mediterraneanness' actually is. Rather, we are interested in exploring singular instances of connectivity across the Mediterranean, with an attention to concrete realities that Giovanna Fiume sees as capable of overcoming the abstracting and reifying tendency inherent in Horden and Purcell's model, both in *Corrupting Sea* and in part of the scholarly literature it has generated.[14]

Paying close attention to concrete instances of connection rather than to a naturalized and assumed connectivity also helps us address the problem of diachronic change, which is difficult to account for through Braudel's or even Horden and Purcell's models. Movement, both literal and metaphorical, is at the heart of each essay of *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean*: movement of people and objects across space, and movement of people, objects, and space itself, understood as change over time. While models of Mediterranean history tend to focus on patterns and consistencies, we are more interested in close-up studies of how single lines and nodes of these

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11 Concannon and Mazurek, 'Introduction', pp. 15–16. On the question of historiographical scale, see Revel, ed., *Jeux d'échelles*; Ghobrial, 'Seeing the World'; Ghobrial, 'Moving Stories'.

12 Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, pp. 7–50, 123–72, 485–529. See also Horden and Purcell, 'The Mediterranean and "the New Thalassology"'.

13 Horden and Purcell, 'The Mediterranean and "the New Thalassology"', p. 734: 'The only way in which the Mediterranean is differentiated both from its neighbours and from comparable areas much farther away is by the sheer intensity and complexity of the ingredients'. For a discussion of 'Mediterraneanness', see the rich article by Fiume and Ben-Yehoyada, 'A proposito di "A Companion to Mediterranean History"'.

14 Fiume and Ben-Yehoyada, 'A proposito di "A Companion to Mediterranean History"', pp. 852–56. The reference is to Horden and Kinoshita, eds, *A Companion to Mediterranean History*.

patterns emerge and move, of the material traces left by movement, and of the multi-layered character bestowed on such traces by instances of rereading, reshaping, and repurposing.

This focus, of course, demands a special attention for the specific roles played by spaces, sites, and places, interpreted as actors provided with agency over both humans and objects rather than as a simple backdrop against which people manipulate things.[15] The problem of movement, in fact, leads us to discuss the communication between the 'Classic Mediterranean' — as David Abulafia would call it[16] — and other liquid spaces. *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* reflects on the difficulty of tracing boundaries for the Mediterranean and, most importantly, the need to critically rethink the connections between the Mediterranean and the rest of the world.[17] The Braudelian concept of the Mediterranean as a pulsating electromagnetic field is still relevant here, as it allows us to include in it spaces such as the German-speaking world, Armenia, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Low Countries.[18] However, the concept of pulsation presupposes a heart and is thus conducive to a centre-periphery dichotomy. For this reason, we should limit the validity of this metaphor to some specific instances, such as the Iberian colonization of the islands of the Atlantic. In other cases, it is better to think about the Mediterranean as echoing, remodulating, and retransmitting pulses coming from other regions of the world, such as China and the Indian Ocean. In a sense, it is best to see the 'Classic Mediterranean' as a field of forces which emanates and incorporates vibrations simultaneously, just like any other part of the world, to allow the emergence of specific cultural constellations. For instance, as we will explore in this volume, consider the specific devotional practices developed in the Canary Islands, which intricately wove together threads from Catholicism and various religious cultures from Africa. Similarly, examine the unique scientific understanding of porcelain elaborated by natural philosophers who drew on intellectual traditions rooted in Europe to give meaning to otherworldly objects originating in China, making their journey through the Middle East and then across the Indian and Atlantic oceans. In this perspective, we may perhaps accept Purcell's view on the Mediterranean's distinctiveness as rooted in it 'being a meeting point not just of all the various spaces within but also of all the extremely diverse zones of transition to what lies outside'.[19]

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15 On this point and the so-called 'spatial turn', see Kümin and Usborne, 'At Home and in the Workplace'; Guldi, 'What is the Spatial Turn?'. For some examples in recent scholarship, see Tazzara, *The Free Port of Livorno*, Hanß and McEwan, eds, *The Habsburg Mediterranean*, and Tarantino and von Wyss-Giacosa, eds, *Twelve Cities – One Sea*.

16 Abulafia, 'Mediterraneans', pp. 67–75.

17 On this topic see the essays collected in Horden and Kinoshita, eds, *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, Part VII; Abulafia, 'Mediterraneans'; Purcell, 'The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness'; Sutherland, 'Southeast Asian History'.

18 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, pp. 168–230.

19 Purcell, 'The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness', p. 53.

Objects in Motion

In the last two decades, a 'return to things' has taken place within the realm of social sciences and humanities, and objects are now seen as producers of knowledge rather than just subjects of study. Objects, in fact, have been released from the geographical and semantic fixity of a constructed origin, and are increasingly being investigated as forms in transformation.[20] The anthropology of material culture, literary scholarship, and sociology have contributed significantly to this paradigm shift. For example, anthropologist Tim Ingold has thoroughly criticized the divide between subject and object, form and substance, mind and matter, in order to demonstrate the connectedness — indeed the inseparability — of culture and materiality.[21] Literary scholar and critical theorist Bill Brown, foregoing issues of representation, has focused on the thing in itself and equally contributed to the debate about the subject-object divide, envisaging 'thingness' as a state of liminality, uncertainty, and ambiguity, which is revealed when objects exit their normal regimes of functionality and which consequently 'really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation'.[22] The late French sociologist Bruno Latour, among his many accomplishments, greatly contributed to the shaping of Actor Network Theory by integrating human and non-human actors within social networks, illustrating the active roles played by both animate and inanimate entities in the formation, mediation, and consolidation of social, cultural, and political relations.[23] As archaeologist Ian Hodder has put it when introducing his dependency-focused concept of entanglement between humans and things:

> discussions on the agency, vibrancy, and vitality of inanimate objects, have converged upon a somewhat shared notion: that subject and object, mind and matter, humans and things mutually shape one another. These diverse approaches concur on the fundamental premise that human existence and social life are contingent upon material things, inextricably entwined with them. Humans and their material counterparts are co-constitutive, engaged in an intricate web of relational production.[24]

In this framework, objects, things, and materiality have acquired greater importance for the historical sciences. In this field, this revival has a deeply layered history reaching back to Thorstein Veblen and Werner Sombart even

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20 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Boivin, *Material Cultures, Material Minds*; Miller, *Stuff*; Struck and others, 'Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History'; Gerritsen and Riello, eds, *The Global Lives of Things*; Findlen, ed., *Early Modern Things*.

21 In the extensive literature produced by Ingold, see the essays collected in Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, and Ingold and Hallam, 'Making and Growing: An Introduction'.

22 Brown, 'Thing Theory', p. 4.

23 In his extensive scholarly production, see especially Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, and Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.

24 Hodder, 'The Entanglements of Humans and Things', p. 19.

before (once again) Braudel's fundamental study on material culture in his *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme* (1979).[25] In fact, in a volume devoted to the role that objects have played in the European study of the past across the early modern age, Peter N. Miller has been able to claim that there have been many 'material turns' in Western historiography before the current one.[26] However, it is certain that in the last two decades historians, art historians, archaeologists, and museum curators have started to draw upon the insights of anthropology and other critical humanities to put matter at the heart of their work, asking questions about how history *of* as well as *from* things can be done.[27]

First of all, objects can raise and answer questions about connectivity, as they bring into contact different areas of the world and shape relationships between them. In fact, if every society has its own distinctive material culture, as Paula Findlen reminds us, 'every society also has a material culture developed over many centuries through commerce and exchange with other parts of the world', not to mention the fact that portions of material culture emerge in the zones where different societies intersect.[28] Over the centuries, objects have been collected, exhibited, used, and narrated to show the supposed closeness between geographically distant cultures, or, on the contrary, the supposed incompatibility between them.[29]

It is no surprise that objects and materiality have risen prominently in many different variants of global history.[30] While 'connecting' objects can be staple commodities such as cotton, they can also be luxury objects such as silk and porcelain,[31] thereby offering the historian the opportunity to delve into different social contexts, and it is not always easy to take properly into account the role played by localized production or the complexity of multilateral exchange vis-à-vis the alleged centrality of Europe as the prime mover of the circulation of goods and people.[32] At the same time, objects can produce and evoke positive as well as negative instances of connectivity: sometimes they shape trade, cultural exchange, political dialogue; at other times they come to embody exploitation, oppression, political enmity. Furthermore, objects can even refer to instances of disconnections, whenever contact and

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25 Findlen, 'Introduction', pp. 9–13. On the deeply layered history of this revival, see e.g., the varied contents of Candlin and Guins, eds, *The Object Reader*.

26 Miller, *History and Its Objects*, pp. 1–20, 33–34.

27 See e.g., Lubar and Kingery, *History from Things*; Harvey, *History and Material Culture*; Findlen, ed., *Early Modern Things*; Gerritsen and Riello, eds, *Writing Material Culture History*.

28 Findlen, 'Preface to the Second Edition', pp. xxvi–xxviii.

29 See e.g. Tarantino and von Wyss-Giacosa, eds, *Through Your Eyes*.

30 See e.g., Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; Gerritsen, 'From Long-Distance Trade to the Global Lives of Things'; Gerritsen and Riello, eds, *The Global Lives of Things*.

31 Berg and others, eds, *Goods from the East*; on cotton and silk see respectively Riello, *Cotton*, and Schäfer and others, *Threads of Global Desire*; on porcelain, Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art*.

32 Riello, 'Objects in Motion', pp. 33–35.

communication break down and the involvements between sets of peoples and different material cultures subside and disintegrate.

Within this context, and in light of the increasing attention paid to the material results and legacies of European imperialism and colonialism, the global dissemination of objects which entailed violent acts of uprooting, renaming, and status alteration has been placed under scrutiny.[33] The plunder of cultural objects, human remains, art, and artefacts, has long created conflict, and its consequences pervade the museum landscape on all sides of the Mediterranean (and beyond). Even the voices of those who tell the story of the objects face scrutiny. The format 'the history of *something* in 100 objects', introduced in 2010 by the former director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor, has been hugely successful. However, the lone, white, British, male, all-embracing voice dominating as the sole author of the book (and of similar projects) has been heavily criticized, for example by the online collaborative project '100 Histories of 100 Worlds in 1 Object', which rejects any form of universal narrative.[34] The ongoing debates surrounding the repatriation of cultural heritage, after all, centre precisely on the movements and transfers of objects, either advocating or deploring the potential of further displacements.

Connectivity and disconnection indeed lead us to discuss issues of mobility and immobility. The paradigm or concept of mobility has underpinned much of the scholarly literature on cross-cultural interactions in the last two decades, constituting yet another methodological 'turn' in the humanities and the social sciences.[35] *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* draws upon the intellectual resources made available across different disciplines by the 'mobility turn' to construct its general framework of reference. However, while movement is a constitutive part of the entanglements between humans and objects at the core of this volume, it is important to clarify that movement itself is not the primary focus of our attention. In response to criticism of reductionistic tendencies in many mobility studies, our volume underscores mobility as a historically determined process: analysing this process enables researchers to better understand various human and non-human experiences

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33 Brodie and others, *Stealing History*; Van Beurden, *Treasures in Trusted Hands*; Hicks, *The Brutish Museums*; Savoy, *Africa's Struggle for Its Art*.

34 See e.g., MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*; see also the recent catalogue of the permanent exhibition of the Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration in Paris: Gokalp, ed., *Une histoire de l'immigration en 100 objets*. The project '100 Histories of 100 Worlds in 1 Object' can be accessed at <https://100histories100worlds.org/>.

35 In the already extensive literature see e.g., Cresswell, *On the Move*, pp. 1–25; Sheller and Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm'; Lucassen and Lucassen, 'The Mobility Transition Revisited'; Greenblatt, 'Cultural Mobility'; Adey and others, eds, *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities*; Bleichmar and Martin, eds, *Objects in Motion*; Ghobrial, 'Moving Stories and What They Tell Us'; Fraser, ed., *The Mobility of People and Things in the Early Modern Mediterranean*; Gonzales Martin and others, 'Cities in Motion, Mobility and Urban Space'; Rossetto and Tartakowsky, 'The Materialities of Belonging'; Nelles and Salzberg, eds, *Connected Mobilities in the Early Modern World*.

involving movement — in our case, intellectual, cultural, and social changes embedded in objects in motion. In addition, in our perspective it is essential to consider this movement as potentially finite, always on the verge of ceasing: mobility acquires significance also in the light of immobility,[36] just as familiar objects are always on the verge of being modified and acquiring new meanings and purposes.

Objects, however, are more than just the embodiment of a connection or things that people can move. They create their own spaces and possess agency.[37] Arjun Appadurai's work highlights how objects have agency within social and cultural contexts. They actively shape human experiences and relationships, thereby acquiring a social life of their own.[38] Through their materiality, objects become imbued with symbolic meanings that reflect and influence individual and collective identities and practices. As a result, they also contribute to shaping their own meshing with human actors: they affect their use and reuse, their rereading and repurposing, their commodification and singularization, value fluctuations, and shifting emotional significance. Considering connectivity, mobility, and materiality as integral aspects of objects provided with agency allows us to focus on the dynamic interplay among objects, practices, and values. This interplay forms an adequate foundation for a history that revolves around objects and is narrated through their perspectives.

However, when discussing the life of objects, another element should be considered: their relationship with emotions. Stephanie Trigg and Anna Welch recently discussed the role of objects and material culture in the emotional life of the medieval and early modern period. They encourage us to contemplate both the objects themselves and the discourse surrounding them, be it contemporary or successive, as evidence of changing emotional responses to the past.[39] According to Jo Labanyi, who claims that 'it is only possible to study things in terms of what people do with them',[40] the study of material culture becomes deeply connected to the history of emotions. Humans and communities are bound affectively to objects, whether they possess monetary value or are seemingly valueless, everyday items, precious possessions, or even magical objects. Affection for these things can be lost or reignited, and just as emotions shape objects, objects also shape emotions.[41]

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36 On the concept of immobility, see e.g., the discussion in Bélanger and Silvey, 'An Im/mobility Turn'.

37 On the agency of objects and the debates revolving around this issue see e.g., Tilley, 'Ethnography and Material Culture'; Hoskins, 'Agency, Biography and Objects'; Latour, *Reassembling the Social*; the essays in Coole and Frost, eds, *New Materialisms*; Olsen, *In Defense of Things*; Van Eck and others, 'The Biography of Cultures'.

38 Appadurai, 'Introduction'.

39 Trigg and Welch, 'Objects, Material Culture and the History of Emotions'.

40 Labanyi, 'Doing Things: Emotion, Affect and Materiality'.

41 Downes and others, 'Introduction'; Jaritz, ed. *Emotions and Material Culture*.

If we approach this issue from the perspective of memory-related studies, we can draw upon Astrid Erll's argument, who posits that within the field of memory studies, individual cultures tend to be conceived as 'separatory'. In contrast, she advocates for considering memory (and its material manifestations) as interconnected and constantly travelling. Erll ultimately claims that 'all cultural memory must travel, be kept in motion, in order to stay alive, to have an impact both on individual minds and social formations'.[42] Objects can play a pivotal role in this dynamic, as emphasized by Joanne Begiato. She notes that objects can distort or compress time when encountered by different emotional communities and cultures, underscoring their role as time-travellers.[43] From this perspective, objects possess a life as much as an afterlife, traceable through their 'routes' — the ways their meanings and the feelings they evoke change over time, or as carriers of different meanings acquired through their journeys. Yet they also prompt individuals to reflect on the past, perhaps evoking memories and nostalgia, just as they can serve as lessons or warnings. Simultaneously, they inspire individuals to look toward the future, instilling feelings projected to future generations. In this way, objects are not static entities but dynamic agents that actively engage with the flow of time, leaving imprints on both individual and collective consciousness.

Rereading, Reshaping, Repurposing

The insights highlighted thus far are at the heart of *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean*. However, the volume aims to connect the repurposing and 'second-handedness' of displaced objects — namely the acquisition of new forms, functions, and meanings as they move — with the changing relations and (self-)perceptions of the communities involved in their displacement. The volume aims to establish this connection as a research perspective, both conceptually and empirically, by discussing the reciprocal influences between such repurposing on the one side and, on the other, the various political, cultural, and emotional investments that accompany the life of the object: production, possession, displacement, modification, oblivion, and reclaim. Political and cultural change, understood as the historical shaping of individual and collective identities at different levels, plays a particularly important role. In this framework, people and things are best discussed as jointly as possible, and for this reason it is useful to flesh out two perspectives which are essential in this regard.

First of all, the concept of the 'biography of an object' is instrumental in illuminating the transformative journey and cultural significance that objects acquire throughout their existence. By examining the social, economic, and

42 Erll, 'Travelling Memory', p. 12.

43 Begiato, 'Moving Objects', pp. 240–41.

cultural dimensions involved, we can unravel the intricate narratives woven into the life of an object. While Appadurai's vision of the object as a social actor effectively leads to seeing objects as having a social life of their own, Igor Kopytoff's notion of commoditization as a regulated but unstable process of becoming highlights the diverse trajectories of objects, all moving through various hands and spaces, each interaction leaving its mark. The ownership and use of an object change over time, reflecting shifting social hierarchies, economic conditions, and cultural preferences. This biographical approach reveals how objects can serve as markers of social status, personal memories, and historical change. They become social actors, participants in exchange systems, bearers of memories, and narrators of cultural histories. By exploring the biography of an object, we unravel the layers of meaning that are embedded in its journey, offering valuable insights into the diverse and interconnected nature of human experiences.[44] One insight by Kopytoff is particularly valuable here. Objects can be seen as continually shifting between states of homogenization — that is, commoditization — and singularization because these transformations depend upon categories of value and judgement which in turn shift according to their ever-changing social context.[45] In other words, the order of things in a given society is patterned on the structure of the order of people. However, Kopytoff suggests that 'societies constrain both these worlds simultaneously and in the same way, constructing objects as they construct people'.[46] The simultaneity of the social construction of objects and people is particularly apparent in the case of 'diasporic objects'. These objects, like their human counterparts, emerge from cultural encounters with the unfamiliar. They can be described as hybrid entities, sites of productive engagements with cultural others. The Atlantic slave trade, for instance, complicates the strict categorization of diaspora as solely pertaining to humans, as it depends on the conflating of the perception of humans and objects. Therefore, the human element remains relevant in all its aspects: the emotional and affective, but also the bodily. Sara Ahmed has vigorously turned the attention to the relations between object and bodies, urging us to contemplate 'how bodies take shape through tending toward objects that are reachable, that are available within the bodily horizon'.[47]

The conditions for a unified research perspective on people and things are further clarified by Tim Ingold's anthropology of material culture. Ingold suggests that every organism is a node in a field of relationships. Rather than viewing organisms as isolated entities, he emphasizes their embeddedness in a complex web of connections. In addition, Ingold proposes that ways of acting

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44 Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things'; see also Gosden and Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects'; Drazin, 'The Object Biography'; Shalem, 'The Second Life of Objects'.

45 A recent example of this dynamic is offered for Islamic objects in eighteenth-century Europe by Dolezalek and Guidetti, eds, *Rediscovering Objects*.

46 Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', pp. 89–90.

47 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, p. 2.

in the environment are also ways of perceiving it: action and perception are not separate processes but deeply intertwined. This perspective challenges the notion of a clear separation between humans and nature, and mind and body, suggesting that humans are intertwined with the larger ecological fabric, and that our interactions with the environment shape our understanding and perception of it. In this perspective things are not *made* but *grown*: the form of an artefact is not imposed from above but emerges through a play of human and non-human forces. So, what people do is not shape substances into given forms, but rather they establish the conditions for the growth of things by interacting with the environment. The growth of artefacts can be seen as the self-transformation over time of the system of relations within which an artefact came into being: the artefact is the crystallization of activity within a relational field, its (ir)regularities of form embodying the (ir)regularities of movement that gave rise to it. If constancy of form is the function of the generative principles embedded in the material conditions of their production, change in form is then a function of a change of those material conditions. In the same way, skills — the specific ways in which practitioners interact with their surroundings, incorporating both embodied knowledge and cognitive processes — are not transmitted as fixed entities but rather regrow in each generation. Cultural variations, then, can be understood as variations of skill, and the transmission of cultural knowledge as its ever-changing inscription in objects and features.

Movement is thus truly generative of the object: objects belong to a current of activity and, in our view, repurposing is a given moment in this current. On the other hand, 'rereading' objects — taking a second look at them in an attempt to reconstruct the missing links in the chain of transformative moments that form their biography — is a historiographical gesture that brings the products of human activity back to life, even though what is restored is not an object's last symbolic or practical function. Rather, it is a new one, another layer on the semantic palimpsest of the object, which specifically encompasses its newfound value as a historical source.[48]

The Essays

It has been noted that the histories of objects can be told as linear, overarching narratives.[49] While the essays in *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* appear to follow a chronological order from the seventh to the early twentieth century, the volume's adopted chronology is actually much more layered. It moves from the relatively narrow scale of individual objects being displaced to

48 On this conceptualization of *rereading*, see the essays collected in Falcucci and others, eds, *Rereading Travellers to the East*.

49 See e.g., Hicks and Whyte, eds, *Cultural History of Objects*.

the much broader one of the histories of their reinterpretation and repurposing. Here, the objects act as centres of gravity, pulling space and time in their direction. This framework is crucial for emphasizing both the specific changes in the use of objects and the agency of objects as they shape the way they are reread and repurposed. It is worth reiterating that the concepts of movement and mobility are not conceived here as universal categories but rather as historically determined phenomena and processes. Consequently, studying the mobility of objects across different ages requires scholarly proficiency in the specific social and cultural processes at play in different settings. Such an approach can only be navigated by scholars with diverse training in various disciplines and methodologies. Therefore, the cohesion of different studies spanning a thousand years is only achievable through a sincere commitment to multidisciplinarity and cooperation across disciplines.

The volume opens with two studies on the reuse of objects symbolizing power and prestige in the Mediterranean space of the Byzantine Empire. Anna C. Kelley's essay delves into the multifaceted agency of Byzantine imperial silks in shaping identities and communicating power across the Mediterranean between the seventh and the twelfth centuries. Kelley examines the production of Byzantine silks in Constantinople, highlighting the strategic weaving of iconographic symbols to denote imperial authority and legitimacy. She then explores the diplomatic exchanges and gifting practices that enabled these silks to project political relationships and foster alliances, before shifting the focus to the reuse of Byzantine silks in the West, where they became vehicles for Western rulers to establish their own narratives of legitimacy in competition with the Byzantine Empire. However, Byzantine silks took on a distinctive role in the religious sphere too, where their associations with antiquity and divine rule led to their sanctification as visual representations of Christian glory. The cycles of reuse and ritual use endowed these silks with accumulated social memory, making them crucial agents in constructing and contesting individual and communal identities. Together, these findings demonstrate the transformative power of Byzantine imperial silks, as they transcended their material form to become potent symbols of political power, cultural rivalry, and religious sanctity. Judith Utz's essay, in turn, focuses on the arrival of Byzantine bronze doors in Italy in the second half of the eleventh century and raises fundamental questions about the circulation of practices, techniques, and material models across political and religious boundaries. In fact, these doors were the embodiment of exchange networks that involved transcultural biographies of artists the traces of which it is still possible to retrieve reading the inscriptions left on the doors. This movement of people, techniques, and materials was thus embodied in a specific object whose mobility, as counter-intuitive as this may sound, may have constituted a fundamental aspect of its materiality. In fact, Utz argues that it was precisely their intended transportability that determined the form and structure of those doors. Mostly commissioned by Italian merchants with close ties to Constantinople, the doors consisted of rather standardized panels and framing elements which

were cast in the Byzantine capital. The artists of Constantinople were able to refer to regional and local models made of wood: in fact, the form of these doors also depended on a change of material, which may have been accompanied by a change in meaning. The shimmering golden brilliance and distinctive iconography of the doors, along with their material composition, promised salvation and played a central role in their popularity and success in Italy and possibly throughout the Mediterranean region, even though the details about the doors' incorporation into specific rites and rituals remains difficult to reconstruct.

The next four essays, which collectively cover the early modern period, delve deeper in questions of human-object connection. They explore the reciprocal and simultaneous processes through which people and things shape each other, revealing instances of objects 'growing' as their environment shifts and changes. In her essay, Maria Vittoria Comacchi draws on the history of 'Oriental' studies and on the history of reading practices to discuss the role played by the French traveller and scholar Guillaume Postel (1510–1581) in the development of cartographical knowledge, in light of his relationship with a specific copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's mathematical geography, the *Taqwīm al-buldān*. This exemplar was likely brought to Europe from Damascus, annotated copiously by Postel to foster his geographical and cartographical interests, it was then pawned when Postel was financially strained during an Inquisition process, after which it circulated widely among sixteenth-century geographers and cartographers and seventeenth-century Arabists, and finally ended up in the Vatican Library as a consequence of the ravages of the Thirty Years War. Through the reconstruction of this particular object's biography, Comacchi not only shows the tangle between it and its first European owner and student, but also sheds light on the geographical and cartographic roots of the 'Arabick interest' of early modern European scholars. What is more, she highlights how a knowledge transfer from the mathematical geography of Abū al-Fidāʾ to early modern European cartography could greatly depend on the new purpose assigned to a single manuscript.

Claudia Geremia, on the other hand, discusses how objects can intersect with questions of gender, race, and religion. Her essay focuses on the use of objects in ritual practices within African cultures and their subsequent reuse in a different context, namely the Canary Islands. The analysis is based on records from the Spanish inquisitorial trials that involved enslaved African women accused of witchcraft. These records provide detailed information about the enslaved individuals who were transported from the Maghreb and West Africa to the Canary Islands, with a particular emphasis on the material culture associated with their religious devotion. The objects they possessed and utilized, such as the *bolsa*, were either crafted in Africa or produced in the Canaries, where they can still be found in the archives of the Museo Canario. While these objects in motion held significant spiritual value from the start, their meanings underwent transformation within the cultural environment of the Spanish islands. Not only did they acquire Catholic spiritual connotations

as articles of religious devotion, but they were also employed by inquisitors as juridical evidence in their witchcraft trials. In essence, this case exemplifies the profound semantic ambivalence of objects and how institutions and power dynamics can determine specific processes of repurposing, influencing the social definition of people and things simultaneously.

In his essay about the life journey of Rabbi Benjamin Me'eli HaKohen, Oded Cohen recounts a diametrically opposed story, where the simultaneous shaping of objects and people is the result of the personal development of this fascinating 'wandering Jew' as he navigates the European Jewish book world of the eighteenth century. From his departure from Jerusalem to his arrival in Livorno, and his eventual settlement in Amsterdam, Benjamin undergoes a profound transformation in his self-image and perception of his place in the world. Initially a passive player, Benjamin transitions into an active participant, becoming a publishing entrepreneur and a senior member of the Republic of Letters. Throughout his migrations, Benjamin immerses himself in the literary world and printing industry, working in various Hebrew printing centres and collaborating with influential figures. His endeavours range from publishing the works of past and present scholars to bringing previously unknown essays to print, showcasing his entrepreneurial spirit and awareness of the material significance of the book industry. Benjamin's consolidation as a literary figure is evident in his integration into the Amsterdam literary milieu and his active role in editing, proofreading, and promoting books, which clearly existed for him as semantic and material manifestations at the same time. Ultimately, Benjamin's journey exemplifies a shift from being chosen by books to actively choosing the world of books himself, in a way reversing the dependency commonly associated with entanglements.

In her essay, Tülay Artan examines the evolving nature of luxury in the Ottoman Empire during the early modern period, focusing on imports from India and further eastern regions. Taking into account the difficult question of sources — records regarding luxury objects in Ottoman accounts and inventories are scarce and perishable items have vanished from repositories, collections, and museums — Artan highlights the multifaceted nature and the complex dynamics surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of luxury in the Ottoman Empire. She explores the Ottoman ruling elite's efforts to display wealth and gain social status through luxurious items, while also examining moralizing discourses that criticized excess and flamboyance. Court chroniclers and bureaucrats, in fact, expressed their concerns about the competition between imported goods and local products, encouraging the support of domestic production, just as they critiqued the use of precious materials like silver and gold in luxury clothing, suggesting alternative materials and proposing restrictions on certain imports. Artan's work thus uncovers the Ottoman elite's fascination with exotic and extravagant objects, while also shedding light on critical perspectives and concerns regarding the societal and economic impact of certain sets of luxurious items. It emphasizes the need to consider multiple factors, including trade, economic policies, and

social stratification, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Ottoman concept of luxury.

The following two essays, while exploring two very different sets of objects, raise similar questions about the material boundaries that define what is considered natural versus artificial, organic versus inorganic, and about how those boundaries could be crossed or negated through intellectual and material strategies. In his essay, Matthew Martin delves into the historical context and intellectual frameworks surrounding the import and then the production of porcelain in Europe, with a particular focus on the Dresden porcelain project in the early eighteenth century. It reveals a fascinating interplay between speculative natural philosophy, alchemical traditions, and practical experimentation. The narrative begins by examining the cultural fascination with porcelain in Europe and the various attempts to understand its nature. Early scholars like Cardano and Scaliger approached porcelain through the lens of natural philosophical speculations, perceiving it as a quasi-natural substance. The inclusion of porcelain objects in medieval treasury collections alongside precious hardstone vessels further reinforced the perception of porcelain as a mineral-like material. Moving on to consider the Dresden porcelain project, headed by scholars Von Tschirnhaus and Böttger, the essay highlights the connection between their practical experimentation and the intellectual traditions of earlier natural historians. While the focus was on practicality, the project drew inspiration from alchemical concepts of emulating and manipulating natural processes to create a mineral substance. The successful production of *Jaspisporcelain*, a high-fired red stoneware, using iron-rich red clay further exemplified the fusion of alchemical and natural philosophical ideas. The subsequent quest for white porcelain led to the discovery of kaolin-bearing white clay, resulting in the long-sought-after 'white gold' porcelain. Importantly, Martin's essay emphasizes the persistent influence of speculative natural philosophy traditions rooted in Europe, despite the increasing availability of imported Chinese porcelain and first-hand accounts of Chinese ceramic production. Ultimately, this exploration illuminates the transformation of porcelain into a European artefact, with its use, significance, and materiality assimilated and even reborn into European intellectual and cultural frameworks.

In his article, Leonardo Rossi explores the complex world of bodies with religious significance, focusing on the late modern age and the spread of 'corpi santi' or incorrupt bodies throughout Catholic nations across the Mediterranean. These bodies, displayed in crystal cases and appearing serene and without signs of corruption, symbolized the triumph of the Christian faith over death and sin while transitioning from organic to inorganic status. The phenomenon of incorrupt bodies and the transfer of bones from the Roman catacombs has distant roots, but in the late modern age, these items took on innovative characteristics. In particular, the use of wax and ceroplastic allowed for standardization and mass production, making these bodies easily replicable. The Italian model of exposed ceroplastic bodies became widely

recognized and emulated, with thousands of bodies of saints, founders, and martyrs circulating throughout Europe, the Mediterranean, and even more distant lands. The article highlights the networks of holiness and the exchange of relics between Rome and various regions. The recognition and replicability of these models played a significant role in their success. Seeing a body in a glass case in a place of worship indicated its religious significance, inspiring emulation among the faithful and leading to requests for similar relics. The article acknowledges that the study of bodies with religious significance is still in its early stages, but promises fruitful results and discoveries as scholars delve deeper into this topic, broadening our understanding of the material dimension of holiness, cults, and popular beliefs, and shedding new light on the relationships between Rome, the Mediterranean, and beyond.

In the final essay, Fedra Pizzato examines the history of the archaeological site known as Scoglio del Tonno (Taranto) from its discovery in 1899 to the onset of the Republican era in Italy (1946). This investigation aims to elucidate the complex interplay between science and politics in Italy, spanning three very different socio-political contexts: the Kingdom of Italy, Fascist Italy, and the early Republican era. Pizzato interrogates the relationship between scientific paradigms and scientific communities, and this forms the basis for her reconstruction of the 'data journey' of scientific artefacts. This exploration leads her to raise two key questions: why do archaeological findings move from the discovery site to other museums? And why, even though they have been considered important enough to be moved, are they sometimes left aside by museum curators? Pizzato deconstructs the socio-political constraints affecting the scientific interpretation of archaeological findings, as well as the personal strategies adopted by scientists in evaluating and reshaping archaeological material. These factors caused the movement of findings from the discovery site to national museums, producing a shift in the social and political meaning of objects. In addition, this foray into the history of science also enables *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* to conclude with a reflection about the meaning of the Mediterranean as a potentially politically charged historical concept. What was at stake in the scientific definition of the archaeological remains of Scoglio del Tonno was indeed their alleged connection either to a northern European civilization or to a 'Mediterranean' origin, in a period when Italy was frantically seeking a historical identity commensurate with its geopolitical ambitions.

As highlighted in the initial pages of this introductory essay, it is important to note that *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* does not offer a comprehensive exploration of the subject of object mobility in the Mediterranean region throughout the centuries. However, the collected works in this volume, engaging in a continuous dialogue with each other and with the discussed historiography, present a rich panorama of interconnected themes, spaces, case studies, and methodological considerations. Within this volume, when examining specific objects, the focus lies on the evolving relationship between humans and things, as well as the construction of identities and their permanent

reconsideration. The notable achievement of *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean* lies precisely in its ability to underscore the multi-directionality, diachronicity, and interconnectedness of the flow of 'matters' that undergo constant reuse, reinvention, and reshaping.

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ANNA C. KELLEY

(Re)using Byzantine Textiles

Adapting and Reinventing Material Identities through the Connected Mediterranean, Seventh–Twelfth Centuries

Introduction: Byzantine Silks in and out of Context

Pre-modern textiles, like all objects, had life cycles. The textile historian John Peter Wild has divided these into six distinct phases: 'manufacture, primary use, maintenance, primary reuse, secondary reuse, and discard', when the material was finally taken out of circulation.[1] As items of adornment (of bodies, objects, and spaces), textiles were visual means of projecting identity throughout this cycle; they could be used to signify ethnic identity, political affiliation, religion, and place within a given social hierarchy.[2] They could also be highly consequential commodities — symbolically as well as economically — fostering interaction across cultural boundaries, particularly the luxury fabrics associated with the elites. Yet, while all medieval societies produced textiles, the practices of recycling and reuse, circumstances of preservation, and modern attitudes towards textiles as artefacts have resulted in large chronological and geographical 'gaps' in the evidence available to scholars. Consequently, past studies of textile mobility have been dominated by a focus on attribution and iconographic transmission rather than the social implications of textile movement or the processes through which meaning was both defined and subverted. This chapter will address these issues by analysing several mechanisms by which the significance of silk textiles produced in the Byzantine East (an important site of early manufacture) was conceived as they entered new cultural contexts in Western Europe, perpetuating cycles of reuse, repurposing, and reinvention.

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1 Wild, 'The Reuse of Textiles in the Roman World', p. 62.

2 Muthesius, 'Silk, Culture and Being in Byzantium', p. 349.

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The medieval Mediterranean was highly connected, with extensive communication networks enabling the multidirectional movement of goods, people, and ideas despite differing social and economic systems.[3] As objects moved across time and space, they were able to 'share, or accrue, meanings across the cultural and confessional divide', a process of layering known as transculturation.[4] Eva Hoffman's seminal use of 'portability' as a heuristic for examining exchange across borders in the medieval world postulated that objects were able to exert agency between cultural contexts because of the existence of a 'common visual language across cultural and religious boundaries' which enabled them to maintain 'active lives'.[5] While Hoffman made it clear that variation in the use of this visual language was to be expected, allowing for distinct cultural expressions, she pointed to a dominant 'pan-Mediterranean' identity and 'international court culture' — defined by shared aesthetic tastes for luxury objects — to explain the reception of elite materials between polities.[6] Hoffman centred her argument on the period from the tenth to twelfth centuries, but the temporal context has been expanded by subsequent scholars.[7] Within this paradigm, moveable items such as luxury textiles fostered the development of this pan-Mediterranean court culture through the adoption and imitation of a shared iconography that provided links between different cultural identities.[8]

However, medieval practices of textiles reuse, often involving physical transformation, complicate this model. As will be discussed, while appropriation of visual symbols was common, this was only one aspect that factored into the use and reuse of silk; equally important were systems of both internal and external power hierarchies as well as practices of memory. Silk had many qualities that underpinned its demand throughout the medieval Mediterranean. Its fineness, lustre, and associations with the 'exotic' Far East made it an appealing status marker across Eurasian kingdoms. But the processes through which it acquired social value, and consequently the capital it could impart,[9] were situational and constantly in flux, changing as the material entered new cultural (and institutional) contexts. As a result, silks became important conveyors of identity and the cultural memories associated with identity formation. It has long been established that a significant aspect of

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3 Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*; Abulafia, 'Mediterranean History as Global History'; Preiser-Kapeller, 'Small Worlds of Long Late Antiquity'. Also see the introduction to this volume.

4 Hoffman and Redford, 'Transculturation in the Eastern Mediterranean', p. 406.

5 Hoffman, 'Pathways of Portability', pp. 21–22.

6 Hoffman, 'Pathways of Portability', pp. 23, 25.

7 For example, Mathews, 'Plunder of War'; Hilsdale, 'Visual Culture'; Farago, 'The "Global Turn"'.

8 Hoffman and Redford, 'Transculturation in the Eastern Mediterranean', pp. 409, 416–17. For a critique of 'court culture' in later periods, see Contadini, 'Sharing a Taste'.

9 On different types of social capital and their role in the construction of social hierarchies, see Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital'.

collective cultural memory is founded on the associations humans form with objects, and that the process by which memory is attached to objects further inspires the act of 'remembering'.[10] In a medieval world where legitimacy was firmly tied to memories of imperial Rome and narratives of the triumph of Christianity in antiquity, items of adornment became significant contributors to these processes.

This chapter will approach the role of textiles in memory and identity formation by examining the reuse of imperial Byzantine silk textiles at different stages in their life cycles, focusing on interactions with Western Europe from the seventh to twelfth centuries, the period that represented the apex of Eastern imperial silk production.[11] It will begin by analysing how the afterlives of these textiles — their reuse in the modern world — has shaped the academic discourse on Byzantine silks. It will then seek to recontextualize these textiles as social artefacts by examining the material mechanisms by which new meanings were created as Byzantine silks crossed the Mediterranean into the West, and how connections between textiles, individuals (gift-givers, recipients, donors), and events were manifested in their reuse to create lineages of memory. It will ultimately argue that the ease with which meaning could be appropriated and altered contributed to Western demand for Byzantine silks, and that articulating the processes of identity formation illuminated by the reuse of these luxury objects allows scholars to reconceptualize the agency of the medieval material world.[12]

Collections and the Afterlives of Byzantine Silk

Many surviving Byzantine silks were preserved in the treasuries of Western ecclesiastic institutions,[13] a fact which continues to shape their life cycle trajectories. Eastern silks tended to arrive in the West as untailored sheets or large hangings, to be customized as desired upon their arrival.[14] They could be constructed, disassembled, and then reconstructed several times over, used and reused as they became worn on their journeys through both secular and

10 Luyster, 'Reassembling Textile Networks', pp. 1041–42.

11 Following the sack of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade, the city's silk industry collapsed and the imperial stores were plundered, resulting in a flood of Byzantine silks flowing into Western Europe with returning crusaders; from the thirteenth century, foreign silks imported by the West largely originated in the Islamic kingdoms. Jacoby, 'Oriental Silks Go West'.

12 This includes non-elite items as well.

13 Virtually none survive from within what had been the Byzantine heartlands. The other primary source of Byzantine textiles are the dry desert necropolises of Egypt and the Levant where the lack of moisture ensures the preservation of organic material. While the life cycles of these textiles also have a story to tell regarding reuse and identity formation throughout the Mediterranean, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

14 Heher, 'Objects of Desire', p. 527.

religious society. The final medieval use of extant Byzantine silks tended to be as reconstituted liturgical vestments (deposited into storage when they were no longer wearable), or they became entombed as burial shrouds and relic wrappings. This was not, however, the end of their story. Textiles held by churches occasionally fell victim to various periods of religious and political conflict over the centuries; many were probably lost during the upheavals caused by the dissolution of the monasteries in Britain under Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547),[15] during the French Revolution, and the two World Wars that ravaged Europe.[16] Eventually the rise of secularization movements across Europe, which coincided with increasing academic interest in artefacts of the medieval past, resulted in many shrines, sarcophagi, and reliquaries being opened with the textile finds removed to museums and institutions (sometimes affiliated with churches and cathedrals).[17]

This has also been highly influential in their use as historical sources. Once removed from their containers and brought back into the public consciousness (occasionally being further divided before making their way into museums), the fragments were often mounted flat to allow greater appreciation of their iconography, and were either put on display or — as was too frequently the case — consigned to large storerooms and largely forgotten about. They became static pieces of art rather than socially active objects whose significance was manifested through interaction; the life cycles of these textiles were therefore reactivated as the social agency of the objects changed once again. Influential collectors valued certain motifs and colours over others, and the largest, best-preserved fabrics were more highly sought after than smaller or greatly damaged fragments, further distorting the evidence available.[18] This was inevitably shaped by the contemporary aesthetic attitudes of the scholars and treasure hunters who sought out precious antiquities, and textiles were no exception. While a fervour for 'orientalist' art objects manifested itself in both amateur and academic circles, theorists like Gottfried Semper emphasized textiles as a source of ornament in 'fine art'.[19] The academic value of these textiles became rooted in their iconography rather than in their original daily function.

The focus on decorative motif that derived from this early treatment can still be felt in their study today; formal stylistic analysis to establish chronological and geographic classifications continues to dominate the field.[20] And while textiles have always been acknowledged as highly mobile, it is only recently that questions of their roles as agents in the social processes of

15 Many early Christian objects, including silks that had made their way to England, were intentionally destroyed. Fleming, 'Acquiring, Flaunting and Destroying Silk', p. 128.

16 Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, p. 119.

17 Marzinzik, 'Expressions of Power'.

18 This was also true for archaeological textiles. Thomas, 'Coptic and Byzantine Textiles', p. 141.

19 Winnik, 'Toward a Grammar of Textiles', 9; Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen*, pp. 247–50.

20 Winnik, 'Toward a Grammar of Textiles', p. 11.

identity formation have begun to be addressed across cultural boundaries.[21] However, the wider mechanisms for the construction of value and identity as they relate to the creation of social memory and the crucial role of textiles still requires further study. Current evidence suggests that there was little trade in 'bulk' textiles across cultural boundaries until the high Middle Ages,[22] but elite textiles were a different story. China, Sogdiana, Byzantium, and — following the collapse of the Sassanian Empire — the Islamic kingdoms were all producers of high-quality silks, both fulfilling and stimulating the trade of foreign luxury textiles, especially in Western European courts which lacked domestic silk industries of their own.[23] Yet the demand was dictated by more than a shared appreciation of symbolic iconography. How people understood this iconography across cultural borders, both acknowledging and reimagining the significance attached to silks through the social interaction and rituals of use and reuse, made these objects active mediators of contested memories and identities.

Political Propaganda and Appropriated Meanings

The Byzantine state, like other major silk producers, was highly invested in controlling both the production and consumption of silk, within and outside of its borders.[24] Silks were particularly important to the court. They were used as physical manifestations of the emperor's power and authority, and were instrumental in developing an imperial language of power; certain iconographic motifs such as griffins, eagles, lions, and royal portraits were woven into fabrics produced in the imperial workshops to be given to members of the court, signifying both their dependency on and allegiance to the emperor.[25] Many of these motifs had been adopted from Roman imperial imagery of antiquity,[26] invoking the memory of Rome's greatness. They were important

21 See the contributions in Thomas, ed., *Designing Identity*; Bühl and Dospěl Williams, eds, *Catalogue of the Textiles*. For Byzantine textiles as political and economic objects, see Muthesius, 'Silken Diplomacy'; Brubaker, 'The Elephant and the Ark'; Cutler, 'Exchanges of Clothing in Byzantium and Islam'; Jacoby, 'Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction'; Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted'.

22 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, p. 696. Production and consumption of these textiles remained largely local.

23 By the beginning of the eleventh century, silks were being produced in Sicily and Italy. Gil, 'References to Silk', pp. 32–33. Silk production remained regional. In 1173, the monk Reginald of Durham (d. *c.* 1190) writing in England described one of the shrouds of St Cuthbert as a 'precious silken fabric, whose production is still beyond our knowledge'. Reginald of Durham, *Libellus*, p. 88; translated in Heher, 'Objects of Desire', p. 523.

24 Galliker, 'Middle Byzantine Silk in Context', pp. 36–37, 72.

25 Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', p. 43; Muthesius, 'Silk, Culture and Being in Byzantium', p. 352; Muthesius, 'Memory and Meaning', pp. 371–73. On the imperial workshops, see Kelley, 'Identity and Forced Labour'.

26 Muthesius, *Studies in Byzantine, Islamic and Near Eastern Silk Weaving*, p. 228; Woodfin,

Figure 1.1. Marriage charter of Otto II and Theophano. 972. Wolfenbüttel, Staatsarchiv. Reproduced with the permission of the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv – Abteilung Wolfenbüttel, 6 Urk 11.

conveyors of political claims of power, legitimacy, and dynastic authority; their use was therefore highly circumscribed. Imperial treatises on court offices and ceremonies such as the *Kletorologion of Philotheos* and the *Book of Ceremonies*, written under Leo VI (r. 886–912) and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (r. 913–959) respectively, included numerous passages detailing the rituals and regulations that dictated the use of silk within the imperial court.[27]

These were also the silks that were used by Byzantine emperors as diplomatic gifts, part of a competitive ritual of gift-giving through which rulers expressed their wealth and power.[28] They were used to seal alliances and political marriages, secure prisoner exchanges, mark tributary status, and foster goodwill amongst both local and foreign officials. The authority imparted by imperial silks was so great, they were even imitated in other media to mark important events; the vellum marriage charter of the future Holy Roman Emperor Otto II (r. 973–983) and Byzantine princess Theophano (*c.* 955–991) was painted to resemble a purple silk decorated with lions in roundels (Fig. 1.1). The rulers of the Frankish kingdoms in particular were

'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', p. 43.

27 For examples, see *Les listes*, IV, p. 201; Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De Ceremoniis*, I, 44–45, pp. 225–31.

28 The bibliography on diplomatic gift-giving is extensive. In particular, see Muthesius, 'Silken Diplomacy'; Cutler, 'Gifts and Gift Exchange'; Cutler, 'Significant Gifts'; Cutler, 'The Enduring Present'; Brubaker, 'The Elephant and the Ark'; Galliker, 'Silk in the Byzantine World'.

frequent recipients of imperial silks;[29] the *Book of Ceremonies* referred to them as kings, distinguishing them from others who were given lesser titles, singling them out for more intense diplomatic relations.[30] This may explain the higher concentration of imperial silks preserved within the borders of the former Frankish lands. References to Byzantine silks in the *Liber Pontificalis* (detailing the biographies of the popes since Saint Peter) also recorded a seemingly constant supply for the pope to gift to churches throughout Rome — many containing murex purple suggesting their origins in the imperial workshops of Constantinople — from the sixth century but becoming more prominent in the eighth.[31]

It was not only the iconography or material that conveyed symbolic meaning; the ceremonials and rituals that surrounded silk use in the Byzantine court were also intended to reflect imperial splendour.[32] Consequently, the strict protocols governing the distribution of imperial silk were reinforced by successive legal edicts limiting their production and export.[33] There were even prohibitions against the sale of certain types of slave or otherwise unfree silk workers to foreigners,[34] all in an effort to restrict the spread of production knowledge. That is not to say that there was no private production of silk; by the tenth century private manufacture proliferated throughout the empire, leading to an even wider circulation of Byzantine silks.[35] Yet the export of certain types remained highly regulated, as Liudprand of Cremona found during his embassy to Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–969) on behalf of the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I (r. 962–973). After a series of particularly acrimonious meetings, Liudprand reported that several purple silk robes were confiscated from him as he was trying to leave.[36]

The ideological significance of the ritual of gifting silk was also implied in these regulations. In Constantine VII's treatise on his imperial expeditions, he detailed not only the costliness and qualities of the textiles from the imperial workshops that were intended for diplomatic exchange, but also their

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29 Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', p. 44.

30 Papal legates were also singled out. Drocourt, 'Travellers, Diplomats, Interpreters', pp. 429–31.

31 Martiniani-Reber, 'Nouveau regard sur les soieries de l'Annonciation'; Osborne, 'Textiles and Their Painted Imitations', pp. 313–14; Brubaker, 'The Elephant and the Ark', p. 191. For an economic study of the silks included in the *Liber Pontificalis* in the ninth century, see Delogu, 'L'importazione di tessuti preziosi'.

32 Muthesius, 'Imperial Identity', pp. 85–86.

33 Jacoby, 'Silk in Western Byzantium', p. 490; Muthesius, 'The "Cult" of Imperial and Ecclesiastical Silks', p. 38; Thomas, 'Ornaments of Excellence', p. 128. For a summary of laws, see Galliker, 'Middle Byzantine Silk in Context', pp. 36–37.

34 *Das Eparchenbuch*, VIII, 7, p. 104.

35 Galliker, 'Silk in the Byzantine World'. This corresponds with increasing references to Byzantine silk in Britain and Scandinavia. See Garver, 'Material Culture and Social History'. According to Fleming, this was primarily through secondary gift-giving from the pope or German emperors. Fleming, 'Acquiring, Flaunting and Destroying Silk', pp. 128–30.

36 Liudprand of Cremona, *Liudprandi Cremonensis*, Legatio, 54, p. 2011.

decorative motifs which included the use of imperial purple, eagles, hornets, and other 'imperial symbols', likely imperial portraits.[37] The *Liber Pontificalis* likewise records these motifs in the Eastern silks included in papal donations.[38] These were not benign patterns. In addition to signifying Byzantine mastery over sericulture and technical silk production,[39] the use of such imperial imagery on gifted textiles (the same motifs that decorated silks given to courtiers) signalled the gift as a symbolic investiture, placing rival foreign rulers below the emperor in the imperial hierarchy just as tributary rulers had been for centuries.[40] The intention was to reinforce the Byzantine emperor's legitimacy as the direct successor of the Roman emperors, particularly after Charlemagne was crowned the first Holy Roman Emperor in 800 (discussed below). That is not to say this was how such gifts were received, and it certainly was not how they were reused in the West.

The adoption of Byzantine iconography and dress was not unknown in Western Europe. In the *Annals of St Bertin*, Hincmar of Rheims (806–882) reported that at the Synod of Ponthion in 876, just after Charles the Bald (r. 875–877) had been crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome, Charles attended the first day 'in a gilded robe and clad in Frankish costume', but that on the final day 'the emperor entered, clad in Greek fashion and wearing his crown, led by the papal legates clad in the Roman fashion.'[41] The distinction between the two modes of dress employed by Charles — Frankish and Greek (Byzantine court dress, possibly gifted) — was intended to send a message. The first evoked Einhard's description of Charlemagne, who he said 'rejected foreign clothes, however gorgeous they might be', preferring to wear 'the customary attire of the Franks'[42] made of linen and skins, and

37 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Three Treatises*, pp. 110–11. On the symbolism of certain imperial motifs, see Martiniani-Reber, 'La matérialité des collections byzantines'; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 337–40; Muthesius, 'Memory and Meaning'. For graphic motifs, see Maguire, 'How Did Early Byzantine Ornament Work?'.

38 See Osborne, 'Textiles and Their Painted Imitations', p. 315 n. 32.

39 Mullet, 'The Language of Diplomacy'; Brubaker, 'The Elephant and the Ark', p. 175. On silk as part of Byzantine identity, see Muthesius, '"Being" in Constantinople'.

40 Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', p. 44; Muthesius, 'Silk, Culture and Being in Byzantium', p. 353. According to John Malalas, the imperial robes given to the king of the Lazi in 522 by Justin I (r. 518–527) had the image of the emperor embroidered in gold and purple on them to represent the king's subservient relationship to the emperor, also recounted by Theophanes the Confessor. John Malalas, *Chronographia*, XVII 9, p. 340; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6051, p. 168.

41 '[…] Venit domnus imperator Karolus in uestitu deaurato, habitu francico […] venit imperator grecisco more paratus et coronatus, deducentibus eum apostolici legatis more romano vestitis […]'. *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, a. 876, pp 201, 205; translation in Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin*, pp. 190, 194.

42 'Vestitu patrio, id est Francico, utebatur […] Peregrina vero indumenta, quamvis pulcherrima, respuebat […]'. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 23, pp. 27–28; translation in Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, p. 31.

thereby embracing his Frankish identity.[43] The second portrayed Charles in the garments of the descendants of Rome. Liudprand related that when arguing with Byzantine officials over who had the right to be called the emperor of the Romans, the Byzantines asserted that the Byzantine emperor wore silks to reflect his primacy in status, wealth, and wisdom, while Otto was mocked for wearing the skins of traditional Frankish dress.[44] Dress, therefore, was intimately tied to notions of legitimacy, authority, and identity in both the East and the West.

Yet even Charlemagne was not completely immune to the symbolic power of imported silks, donating many in the form of vestments to the cathedral at Aachen.[45] And in the same passage extolling the virtue he placed on Frankish clothes, Einhard described two instances in which Charlemagne himself embraced (however reluctantly) Eastern imperial dress, writing '[…] Once in Rome when Pope Hadrian had requested it and, on another occasion, when his successor Leo had begged him to wear a long tunic, chlamys, and shoes designed in the Roman fashion'.[46] Both Charlemagne and the popes were clearly aware of the symbolic power such regalia could impart to the wearer. The use of Byzantine imperial costume after Charles was crowned as Holy Roman Emperor, therefore, implies that this was a conscious choice to appropriate the symbolic language of imperial authority. In the East, this authority was based on the relationship between the emperor and God, manifested in the official regalia. As articulated by Constantine VII:

> These robes of state and the diadems, which you call *kamelaukia*, were not fashioned by men, nor by human arts devised or elaborated, but as we find it written in secret stories of old history, when God made emperor the former Constantine the Great, who was the first Christian emperor, He sent him these robes of state by the hand of His angel […] and charged him to lay them in the great and holy church of God, which, after the name of that very wisdom which is the property of God, is called St Sophia; and not to clothe himself in them every day, but only when it is a great public festival of the Lord.[47]

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43 Brubaker, 'The Elephant and the Ark', p. 189; Garver, 'Go Humbly', p. 217.

44 Liudprand of Cremona, *Liudprandi Cremonensis*, Legatio, 53–54, pp. 210–11.

45 Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 26, p. 35.

46 '[…] Excepto quod Romae semel Hadriano pontifice petente et iterum Leone successore eius supplicante longa tunica et clamide amictus, calceis quoque Romano more formatis induebatur'. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 23, p. 28; translation in Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, p. 31. Note here, both the *clamide* (chlamys) and *calceis quoque Romano more formatis* (shoes designed in Roman fashion) refer to Greek items of dress, compared to the *romano vestitis* from the *Annals of St-Bertin*, which refers to the vestments of Roman (papal) legates.

47 'Αἱ τοιαῦται στολαὶ καὶ τὰ στέμματα, ἃ παρ᾽ ὑμῶν καμελαύκια ὀνομάζεται, οὔτε παρὰ ἀνθρώπων κατεσκευάσθησαν, οὔτε ἐξ ἀνθρωπίνων τεχνῶν ἐπενοήθησαν ἢ ἐξηργάσθησαν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἀπὸ παλαιᾶς ἱστορίας ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λόγοις γεγραμμένον εὑρίσκομεν, ἡνίκα ὁ θεὸς βασιλέα ἐποίησεν Κωνσταντῖνον ἐκεῖνον τὸν μέγαν, τὸν πρῶτον Χριστιανὸν βασινλεύσαντα, δι᾽ ἀγγέλου

Figure 1.2. Henry II enthroned, wearing the long tunic and Loros of the Byzantine emperor, before 1022. Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica, Ott.Lat. 74, f. 193^{v}. © The History Collection / Alamy Stock Photo.

The power of the emperor was vested in him by God and symbolized by the imperial garments; this was the legitimacy both Charlemagne and Charles were invoking by wearing Greek dress, claiming the title, lineage, and authority of the Roman emperor. While there is no depiction of Charles wearing Byzantine costume, an image of the Ottonian Henry II (r. 1014–1024) from the gospel book he donated to the Monastery of Montecassino depicts him enthroned wearing a long tunic and ceremonial *loros* of the Byzantine emperors wrapped around him, demonstrating the longevity of the imperial costume (Fig. 1.2).[48]

The Byzantines referred to themselves as Romans (*Romaioi*) and saw their empire as the continuation of the Roman Empire. The emperor was therefore the emperor of Rome, direct successor of Augustus. When Charlemagne was crowned Roman emperor in Rome on Christmas day in 800, the pope Leo III (r. 795–816) was taking advantage of the fact that at that moment, there was

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αὐτῷ τὰς τοιαύτας στολὰς ἐξαπέστειλεν και τὰ στέμματα […] καὶ διωρίσατο αὐτῷ θεῖναι ταῦτα ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἁγίᾳ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἥτις ἐπ᾽ ὀνόματι αὐτῆς τῆς ἐνυποστάτου σοφίας Θεοῦ ῾Αγια Σοφία κατονομάζεται, καὶ μὴ καθ᾽ ἑκάστην αὐτὰ ἀμφιέννυσθαι, ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δημοτελὴς καὶ μεγάλη τυγχάνῃ δεσποτικὴ ἑορτή'. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De administrando imperio*, 13, pp. 66–67, with translation. Constantine VII was warning his son from giving any such garments to foreign rulers to, as Woodfin notes, 'preserve the mystique of Byzantium's imperial legitimacy'. Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', 42.

48 The donation followed Henry's campaign against the Byzantines in southern Italy. See Parkes, 'Henry II', pp. 136–37.

technically no Roman emperor in the East. Constantine VI (r. 780–797), the son of Leo IV (r. 775–780) and his wife Eirene of Athens (d. 803), had been deposed and blinded — most likely dying shortly afterwards — on the orders of his own mother in 797 so that she could retake the throne, which she held until 802. According to Frankish sources,[49] this provided the pope with a justification to crown a new emperor and reward Charlemagne for his protection when Leo was accused of adultery by his opponents and nearly blinded himself.[50] But in reality, it was the consequence of a long period of political manoeuvring in response to the ongoing territorial conflict in the Italian Peninsula.[51] Charlemagne's and Charles's adoption of the Byzantine imperial dress in certain official settings involving the pope and papal legates as representatives of Rome (and probably in the presence of those who would report on the events) was therefore meant to redirect these associations. The Holy Roman Emperor could also lay claim to the memory of Rome and the inheritance of Augustus, at the behest of God's representative on Earth no less. The message was provocative on both sides of the Mediterranean, and the 'problem of two emperors' led to a perpetual undercurrent of competition with both East and West claiming the identity of ancient Rome,[52] the situation Liudprand confronted in his embassy to the court of Nikephoros.

Charles's statement of his legitimacy may have served a domestic purpose as well. His elevation to the position of Holy Roman Emperor had not been without opposition, first and foremost by his brother Louis the German (r. 843–876), the king of East Francia, and Louis's son Carloman who had also aspired to the position.[53] In emphasizing his rights to rule at the Synod through the appropriation and reuse of the Byzantine costume of authority, he may have also been attempting to subdue Frankish resistance. Reception of Charles's Byzantine dress was mixed. Hincmar frames Charles's assertions of legitimacy as warranted, highlighting the interventions of clerical figures in his king-making.[54] However, in the *Annals of Fulda*, written from the perspective of Charles's opponents in East Francia, Charles's use of Byzantine court dress was portrayed as a sign of pretension to which he was not entitled, and which further demonstrated his abandonment of Frankish customs:[55]

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49 Compiled in Neil, 'Regarding Women on the Throne', pp. 124–28.

50 In contrast, papal sources do not mention Eirene, but do highlight Charlemagne's protection of Leo III in his court at Paderborn. *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vol. II, XCVIII, pp. 5–8.

51 After his consecration in 795, Leo signalled his alliance with Charlemagne by sending him the keys to St Peter's shrine and the papal banner, 'recognising him as Rome's protector'. Neil, 'Regarding Women on the Throne', p. 121. See also Emerick, 'Charlemagne'. On the development of medieval imperial ideology and Christian political theology, see De la Peña, *The Cultural Power*, ch. 1.

52 Kolditz, 'Beyond Liudprand and Theophano', pp. 153–54.

53 Shepard, 'Courts in East and West', p. 21.

54 Nelson, *Rulers and Ruling Families*, chap. 17.

55 Brubaker, 'The Elephant and the Ark', pp. 189–90.

> King Charles returned from Italy to Gaul and is said to have adopted new and unaccustomed modes of dress […] For, despising all the customs of the Frankish kings, he held the glories of the Greeks to be the best, and so that he might show his overweeningness more fully he put aside the name of king and ordered that he should be called emperor and Augustus of all kings on this side of the sea.[56]

So, while there was a common recognition of the symbolism of Byzantine imperial costume, even when adopted outside its borders, its reuse in the West — along with assertions of memory and identity — was politically determined, intended to subvert.

Adaptation, Alteration, and Political Manipulation

The appropriation of Byzantine imperial silks as symbols of power could also be expressed in less overt ways. As silk gifts were usually sent in untailored form, they could be easily altered to serve a variety of purposes.[57] The flexibility in the use of these precious gifts was reflected in the terminology used for them in the West. In the *Liber Pontificalis* silk textiles were typically referred to as curtains (*cortinae*), drapes (*vela*), or coverings (*vestes*).[58] These could be used either as furnishings or sewn into garments. A tenth-century manuscript from Regensburg depicts Henry II, Duke of Bavaria, wearing traditional Germanic costume, but which had clearly been created using Byzantine silks, displaying the characteristic roundel patterns.[59] A portrait of the Anglo-Saxon King Edgar (r. 959–975) in a manuscript of the *Regularis Concordia* also seems to depict Edgar wearing a gown composed of two silks of differing patterns sewn or layered together (Fig. 1.3).[60] While not constituting a full costume, the associations of silk and its recognizable iconography would have been enough to convey the desired message of authority and legitimacy to a courtly audience familiar with the material. The use of Byzantine silk in the West therefore was not solely based on imitation. Western European courts

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56 'Karolus rex de Italia in Gallian rediens novos et isolitos habitus assumpsisse perhibetur […] Omnem einem consuetudinem regum Francorum contemnens Grecas glorias optimas arbitrabatur et, ut maiorem suae mentis elationem ostenderet, ablato regis nomine se imperatorem et augustum omnium regum cis mare consistentium appellare praecepit'. *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 876, p. 86; translation in Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda*, p. 79.

57 Heher, 'Objects of Desire', p. 527. The size of pattern repeats can sometimes give a clue as to their original form; the large repeating roundels on the numerous extant lion silks suggest they were originally wall hangings or curtains. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, p. 37.

58 Osborne, 'Textiles and Their Painted Imitations', p. 315. There are also references to a *chrysoclabas*, probably the same garment referred to as *chrysoklabos* in the *Book of Ceremonies* worn during the Holy Monday processions. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, I, 82; Grotowski, 'The Gift of Emperor Michael', p. 27.

59 Heher, 'Objects of Desire', p. 527.

60 Fleming, 'Acquiring, Flaunting and Destroying Silk', p. 138.

Figure 1.3. King Edgar seated between St Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester, and St Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, eleventh–first half of the twelfth century. London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A III, f. 2^{v}. © The British Library Board.

also did not hesitate to alter those fabrics that made their way across borders. By manipulating the recycled silks used as symbols of imperial authority, Western rulers sought to neutralize the associations of subservience these textiles had within the Byzantine sphere and to create their own competitive representations of superiority.

The symbolic competition between East and West continued through the tenth and eleventh centuries as Ottonian incursions threatened Byzantine territory, even as marriage negotiations were intended to facilitate diplomatic ties.[61] Otto I had sent several embassies to Constantinople seeking an imperial bride for his son, Otto II, before Theophano, niece of emperor John I Tzimiskes (r. 969–976), was eventually sent to Italy in 972. Her father was John's brother-in-law and a high-ranking member of the aristocracy, but not a blood member of the imperial family;[62] nevertheless, the marriage itself may have implied an acknowledgement of Ottonian ascendency by John.[63] Despite her supposed 'Byzantine influence' on the Ottonian court,[64] there is little evidence that she had any political sway, and records of embassies between the Ottonian and Byzantine courts during Otto II's reign are nearly non-existent.[65] The appropriation of Byzantine imperial imagery used in the Ottonian court, rather than signalling cooperative reverence for the court in Constantinople, can therefore be read as symbolic of cultural rivalry.[66] In this vein, the proliferation of depictions of Theophano when compared to other royal Ottonian women, highlighting a Byzantine princess in Frankish contexts (Fig. 1.4), was perhaps an aspect of this cultural competition,[67] the ultimate example of the reuse of Byzantine imagery in Western symbolic adaptive appropriation. This can be seen in the reuse of silks as well.

While the example of Charles the Bald illustrated the reuse of Byzantine costume to adopt the image of divine imperial legitimacy, we can also see how slight alterations to imported textiles could redefine layers of symbolism — and their role in identity making — in the political sphere. One such means of alteration was the addition of embroidered images and

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61 See Kolditz, 'Beyond Liudprand and Theophano'.

62 John I was himself a usurper and not a member of the Macedonian dynasty.

63 Kolditz, 'Beyond Liudprand and Theophano', pp. 148–49.

64 This is a common theme in several of the contributions in Davids, ed., *The Empress Theophano*.

65 Kolditz, 'Beyond Liudprand and Theophano', pp. 151–52. Relations between the two picked up again during Theophano's regency for her son, Otto III, during which she tried to negotiate a marriage with a Byzantine princess. One of the daughters of Constantine VIII, either Zoe or Theodora, was sent to the Ottonian Court in 1002, but Otto III died before the marriage could take place and the princess was sent back to Constantinople.

66 Blake, 'Competition or Admiration?', pp. 299–313; Wainwright, 'Import, Export', p. 361. For the reign and artistic output of her son, Otto III (r. 996–1002), see Wangerin, *Kingship and Justice*, pp. 122–34; Garrison, *Ottonian Imperial Art*, ch. 2.

67 Wainwright, 'Import, Export', p. 362.

Figure 1.4. Theophano holding the infant Otto III kneeling at the feet of Christ across from Otto II. Late tenth century. Milan, Raccolte d'Arte Applicata del Castello Sforzesco, inv. avori 15. © Comune di Milano/Saporetti, 2004.

inscriptions.[68] The so-called Chormantel of St Cunegunda originated as an eleventh-century Byzantine silk depicting the seated Byzantine emperor (Fig. 1.5), holding the imperial regalia of the Roman *labarum* and *globus cruciger* and wearing the ceremonial *loros* and crown with *pendalia*, similar to the imperial imagery found on coins and ivories.[69] In addition to invoking the imperial hierarchy, the image of the emperor on silk was meant to act as a substitute for his physical presence and was therefore a potent symbol.[70] In an example of post-reconquest diplomacy, probably written in 1265, the *grammatikos* of Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1261–1282) named Manuel Holobolos (*c.* 1245–1310/1314) recounted a speech made by Genoese diplomats requesting that an image of the emperor be sent as part of the Treaty of Nymphaion in 1261.[71]

68 Miller, 'The Sources of Textile and Vestments', pp. 86–88.

69 Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', p. 39.

70 Negrău, 'The Ruler's Portrait in Byzantine Art', p. 64; Studer-Karlen, 'The Emperor's Image in Byzantium', pp. 139–40. The iconographic characteristics of the imperial image would have made it recognizable as invoking both the presence of the emperor as well as his imperial authority. Carile, 'Imperial Icons in Late Antiquity and Byzantium'.

71 Macrides, 'The New Constantine', pp. 16–20.

Figure 1.5. Detail of the imperial portrait on the Chormantel of Cunegunda, tenth–early eleventh century. Bamberg, Diözesan-museum, DMB inv. no. 3.3.0002. Reproduced with the permission of the Diözesanmuseum Bamberg. Photo: Uwe Gaasch.

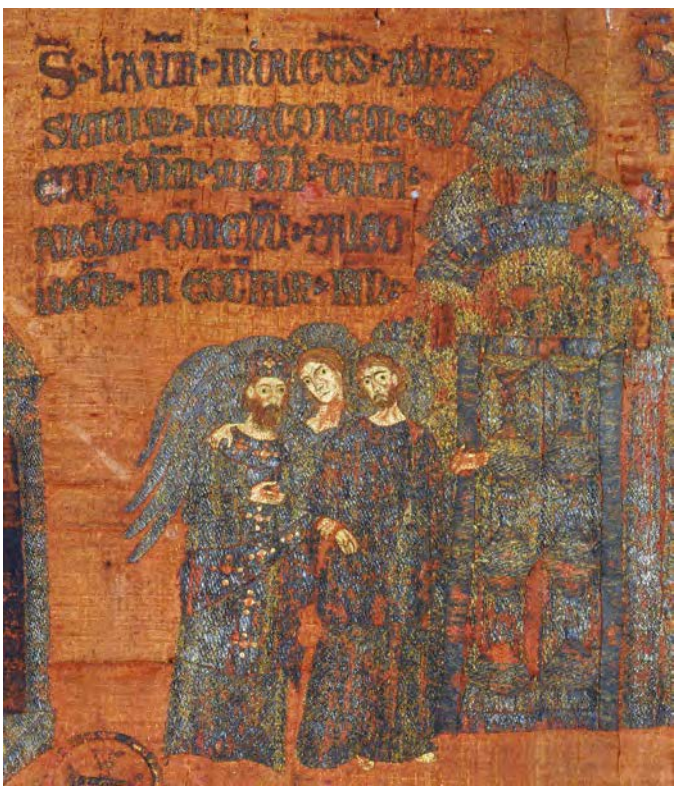

Figure 1.6. Michael VIII Palaiologos and Saint Laurence embroidered on silk, thirteenth century. Genoa, Museo di Sant'Agostino. © Comune di Genova.

In reference to the power of the imperial image, the Genoese made clear their view that such an image would offer protection to their city:

> Soothe the piercing love of this [city], through your image rendered on a cloth: for the form of the beloved is a great remedy for lovers. It will be a strong defence against our enemies, an averter against every plot, a powerful parapet for the city which is yours and ours, a strong tower and an adamantine wall to face the enemy.[72]

Two silks with embroidered images of the emperor Manuel were subsequently sent to the city, one of which may be the *pallio* still to be found in Genoa (Fig. 1.6).[73]

While an object imbued with such meaning would clearly not have had the same currency in the Western court of the Holy Roman Emperor, such silks would have been too valuable to discard, and still evoked the social memory of Roman legitimacy as well as the divine authority imparted to the emperor by God. But the political messaging could be changed. At some point after the original silk of the Chormantel of St Cunegunda arrived in the Frankish court, a long Latin inscription was added, which in its current form is retained only in block fragments inserted between the images but was apparently an encomium to Henry II.[74] The court embroiderers took what was supposed to be a symbol of the Ottonian Empire's tributary status to the Byzantine emperor, and co-opted the original imagery, giving new meaning to the silk.[75] The political relationship was inverted; Henry was now declaring his supremacy over his Byzantine counterpart by appropriating and giving his name to his rival's image while maintaining the memory of ancient Rome implied by the iconography and the material.

Roman workshops similarly employed embroidery to alter and 'customize' Byzantine silks donated by popes to other ecclesiastic institutions which included imagery that would have only been relevant in specific Roman contexts, again recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*.[76] For example, Pope Leo IV

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72 'δὸς ὡς δυνατὸν σεατὸν τῇ σῇ πόλει καὶ ἡμετέρᾳ, παρηγόρησον διὰ τοῦ σοῦ χαρακτῆρος πέπλῳ και γραφαῖς ἐγκειμένου τὸν ταύτης διαπρύσιον ἔρωτα. μέγα τοῖς ἐρῶσι φάρμακον και γεγραμμένον τὸ τοῦ ἐρωμένου πέφυκε μόφωμα. δύναταί σου καὶ ἡ εἰκών, ἂν ἡμῖν παρέν, πολλά. ἀμυντήριον ἔσται κατὰ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἀντιπάλων στερρόν, πάσης ἐπιβουλῆς ἀποτρόμαιον, ἔπαλξις τῇ σῇ καὶ ἡμετέρᾳ πόλει κρατερά, πρσπύργιον ἰσχυρὸν καὶ τεῖχος ἄντικρυς ἀδαμάντινον'. Manuel Holobolos, *Orationes I*, p. 46; translation in Hilsdale, *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy*, p. 49.

73 See Hilsdale, *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy*, 52–58. The apotropaic nature of some textiles is discussed by Maguire, 'Garments Pleasing to God'; Maguire, 'How Did Early Byzantine Ornament Work?'.

74 At some point in the fourteenth century, the figures and inscriptions were removed from the ground weave and have been reassembled several times. Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', p. 36.

75 Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', p. 45.

76 Osborne, 'Textiles and Their Painted Imitations', p. 319; Miller, 'The Sources of Textile and Vestments'.

(r. 847–855) donated numerous silks with his own portrait on them which must have been embroidered in Roman workshops, emphasizing the prestige of his role as the donor.[77] Pope Paschal I (r. 817–824) donated a 'vestment of Byzantine purple' to the Church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere which depicted a scene, probably also embroidered, of the saints Cecilia, Valerian, and Tiburtis being crowned by an angel.[78] The invocation of memory manifested in silk textiles in religious settings, however, relied on different kinds of interactions, and therefore different mechanisms of signification, from those that were used in the politics of court.

Silk, Piety, and Sanctity

While Rome and the papal kingdom maintained diplomatic relations with the Byzantine emperor, commercially connected to the East by several maritime trade routes,[79] for most religious institutions the silks deemed necessary for vestments and church furnishing had to be acquired through donation. The Council of Aachen in 836 went so far as to request that Western rulers who had received silks as gifts from the Byzantine emperors donate them to the church.[80] Dress had become a way for church figures to distinguish themselves from the laity and, as in secular courts, to manifest internal hierarchies.[81] Consequently, as was the case with the Chormantel of Cunegunda, donated silks were often used for liturgical clothing. The costliness and exclusivity of luxury textiles meant that once these fabrics were sacralized, they would be reused multiple times over the centuries, again providing a material link between ritual, sacred authority, and antiquity.[82] Removing such conveyors of imperial propaganda from the political sphere also removed any lingering association of investiture and cultural competition; at the same time, the donation of such costly and highly regarded items constituted an act of piety and a marker of social status for the donor, sometimes even marked by the addition of a donor inscription.[83] Donation could itself also be a political act. The alliance

77 *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vol. II, CV, pp. 109–30. This may have also been an allusion to the use of the imperial portrait on silks by the Byzantine emperors.

78 *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vol. II, C, pp. 56–57; Osborne, 'Textiles and Their Painted Imitations', p. 319.

79 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, pp. 502–69; Drocourt, 'Travellers, Diplomats, Interpreters', pp. 431–34.

80 *Concilium Aquisgranense*, a. 836, pp. 740–41.

81 Garver, 'Go Humbly', p. 205; Garver, 'Girlindis and Alpais', pp. 155–56; Miller, 'The Significance of Saint Cuthbert's Vestments'. On the development of clerical vestments, see Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, ch. 3.

82 Feliciano, 'Sovereign, Saint, and City', pp. 123, 131.

83 Woodfin, 'Presents Given and Presence Subverted', 44; Garver, 'Textiles as a Means'; Garver, 'Material Culture and Social History', p. 786. Papal gift-giving was also important for the

between the Carolingians and papacy established in the mid-eighth century resulted in increasing numbers of precious silks being sent to the popes in Rome, as reflected in the records of their own donations. When this relationship became strained in the later ninth century, fewer textiles appeared in the papal donations, and where they were recorded, silk was largely replaced by linen.[84]

Once they had entered the religious sphere, the donated silks were transformed from objects of political negotiation into 'holy objects as they entered into ritual and aesthetic dialogue' with other iconographic elements of ecclesiastic ceremonial.[85] That these textiles were then often used as burial shrouds for important individuals or as wrappings for relics became a reflection of the religious significance they could accrue. When Bishop Gunther died on his way home from a diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 1065, his body was wrapped in one of the silks possibly sent as a gift from Constantine X (r. 1059–1067) to Henry IV (r. 1056–1106); this silk depicted a triumphal scene of the emperor on horseback, and was probably originally a wall hanging (Fig. 1.7).[86] Given the symbolic significance of the gifting of imperial portraits, combined with the added associations of military prowess implied by the triumphal procession, one may wonder if the choice to use this particular silk for Gunther's burial was made to spare Henry any annoyance, neutralizing the meaning before it even arrived at the German court. But the inclusion of such silks as shrouds for secular figures — especially rulers — not only served as status markers, reinforcing the importance of the individuals, but also re-established their use in political memory. Despite his reluctance to embrace silk garments during his life, Charlemagne's tomb contained several Byzantine silk shrouds, including the famous Aachen Charioteer silk (Fig. 1.8). The image of the imperial charioteer with arms raised in triumph was used in Byzantium to signal the emperor's supremacy,[87] a parallel not only to Charlemagne's political role as the first Holy Roman Emperor, but also to his religious position as the defender of the pope and Christianity.

Old textiles that had become too worn to use as vestments or even shrouds could also be reused as relic wrappings, a common practice throughout the

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distribution of silks throughout the Christian West. Osborne, 'Textiles and Their Painted Imitations', pp. 316–17.

84 Osborne, 'Textiles and Their Painted Imitations', p. 314.

85 Feliciano, 'Medieval Textiles in Iberia', p. 62.

86 Muthesius, 'Silken Diplomacy', p. 240. This was previously deemed Basil II on horseback after his defeat of the Bulgars in 1017, but this attribution has been questioned and it is now thought to depict John I Tzimiskes. See Stephenson, 'Images of the Bulgar-slayer'; Prinzig, 'Nochmals zur historischen'.

87 For charioteer silks as a group, see Walker, *The Emperor and the World*, pp. 25–26. The central figure also recalls the Greek god Helios, an image adopted by Constantine I (r. 306–337) at one point, reinforcing memories of dynasty. Muthesius, 'Memory and Meaning', pp. 374–75.

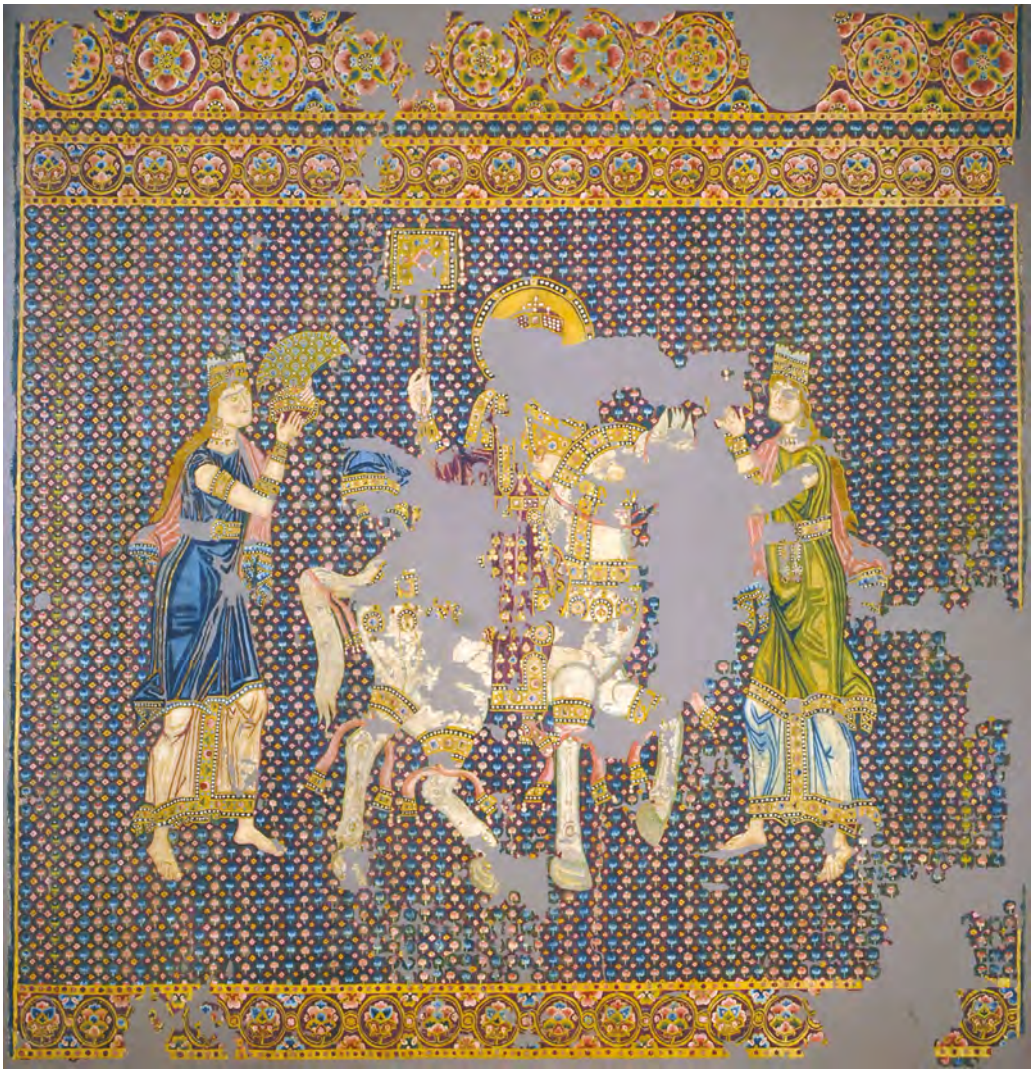

Figure 1.7. Shroud of Bishop Gunther (*Guntertuch*), eleventh century. Bamberg, Diözesanmuseum, DMB inv. no. 2728.3.13. Reproduced with the permission of the Diözesanmuseum Bamberg. Photo: Ingeborg Limmer.

medieval world.[88] Again, using precious textiles to wrap relics served multiple functions. These fabrics not only acted as a form of protection, but they also helped to establish the meaning, identity, authenticity, and ritual of sacred

88 Bagnoli, 'Dressing the Relics'. The donation of foreign silks to Western ecclesiastic institutions and their subsequent recycling is the subject of an ongoing project by Valerie L. Garver, presented in the paper 'Reducing and Reusing Silk in the Carolingian Empire' at the workshop *Portability in the Early Global Middle Ages*, 26–27 May 2023, University of St Andrews.

Figure 1.8. Charioteer silk from the tomb of Charlemagne, eighth–ninth century. Aachen, Aachen Cathedral Treasury, Inv.-Nr. T0010 GR009. © Domkapitel Aachen. Photo: Klaus Bednorz.

objects, implying that the holy relic was something only for the sight of a select few;[89] the silk wrapper became a 'symbol of God's invisible presence' and the act of wrapping established a relationship 'between the earthly remains of saints and their heavenly lives'.[90] Some of the most famous Byzantine silks have been preserved as relic wrappers. The so-called Mozac Hunter silk (Fig. 1.9), was donated by Pepin II of Aquitaine (r. 838–852) to the monastery at Mozac in either 847 or 848 specifically to be used as a shroud for the relics of St Austremoine when they were moved from the church at Volvic.[91] The figure

89 Smith, 'Care of Relics'; Feliciano, 'Sovereign, Saint, and City', p. 144. The monetary value of the silk inured spiritual value on the relic. Bagnoli, 'Dressing the Relics', p. 106. Also see Durand, 'La part des textiles d'Egypte'.

90 Bagnoli, 'Dressing the Relics', pp. 104–05.

91 It has been suggested this silk was originally given to Louis the Pious (r. 814–840) by Emperor Theophilos (r. 829–842) after a joint campaign against the Arabs. Whitfield, *Silk, Slaves, and Stupas*, pp. 210–12.

Figure 1.9. Hunter silk from the Abbey at Mozac, ninth century. Lyon, Musée des Tissus MT 27386. © Lyon, Musée des Tissus – Pierre Verrier.

of a rider in jewelled imperial dress hunting a lion, originally signifying the triumph of the Byzantine emperor over his enemies,[92] may have translated to the triumph of the saint over pagans when he Christianized Gaul in the third century.[93]

As a result, both shrouds and relic wrappings could often become cult objects and even relics themselves, acquiring associations with the holy through physical contact which imparted the power of the holy person or

92 Whitfield, *Silk, Slaves, and Stupas*, pp. 207–10; Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, pp. 68–69; Walker, *The Emperor and the World*, pp. 25–26.

93 Gregory of Tours, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Francorum*, 1, 28, pp. 29–31.

Figure 1.10. Dioskouroi silk, eighth–ninth century. Maastricht, Treasury of the Basilica of Saint Servatius. Reproduced with the permission of the Stichting Schatkamer Sint Servaas.

saint onto the textile itself.[94] At the same time, their very age continued to provide a link to 'antiquity'. The contact relics became 'active agents of divine power' and each time a tomb or reliquary was opened or moved and re-enshrined, new wrappings were added, therefore, in turn, being transformed into holy objects.[95] Such was the case of the seventh- or eighth-century fabric known as the Dioskouroi Silk (Fig. 1.10), which had been donated by the archbishop of Worms to the shrine of St Servatius in Maastricht in 826, but which eventually became revered as an item of the saint's clothing and therefore a direct conduit to the saint himself.[96] The imagery, depicting the mythological Castor and Pollux participating in a Mithraic sacrifice, again recalled antiquity and the ultimate triumph of Christianity over the pagans.[97] And like the bodies of saints themselves, textile relics could be divided up and distributed to religious institutions across Christendom. When St Cuthbert

94 Fulghum, 'Under Wraps', p. 15; Schorta, 'Textilreliquien und Textile Reliquienhüllen'; Schorta, 'La Presentation des Reliques'; Goehring, 'Textile Contact Relics'; Rosser-Owen, 'Islamic Objects in Christian Contexts', p. 53.

95 Cremeens, 'Weaving Sanctity', p. 3.

96 Bagnoli, 'Dressing the Relics', p. 107.

97 For the power of physical connections with antiquity, see Feliciano, 'Sovereign, Saint, and City'.

was interred in Durham Cathedral, his body was wrapped in several layers of silk, including a Byzantine rider silk. While his body remained intact, this was not true for the textiles; between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, textile relics of St Cuthbert could be found in abbeys and cathedrals across England.[98] Reginald of Durham even recorded that in the twelfth century, several fragments were removed from the tomb and sent with a monk on a tour of southern Scotland by Bishop Hugh de Puiset, performing several miracles.[99] The transformation into objects embodying the glory of Christianity and Christian identity was complete.

Conclusion: Building Material Identity and Memory

Imperial Byzantine silks gained significance across the medieval world because of their ability to impart legitimacy and project identity, but the processes through which this was achieved were contextually dependant. The transformative nature of their cycles of use and reuse enabled them to redefine their agency across intersecting political and cultural, as well as secular and religious, borders. The weavers in the imperial silk workshops in Constantinople recalled iconographic associations with Rome to denote the supreme power and authority of the emperor, symbols that were strategically deployed in diplomatic exchanges with foreign courts. Yet, even as the meaning of such a visual language was understood throughout the Mediterranean, courts in Western Europe deployed their own strategies to co-opt the messaging potential of silken objects for a variety of internal and external audiences. While appropriation was used in certain situations, physically altering the material also facilitated the reinvention of the iconography and the memory it invoked. The agency of these silks was therefore rooted in competition and contestation. There was not just a single way of claiming imperial power and legitimacy was also recalled through associations with the divine, enabling silk to engage with multi-layered cultural expressions. Mobility was crucial to these processes.

Hoffman asserted that through movement, 'the object both defines and is defined by its relation to other objects, people and representational practices'.[100] Refocusing discussions of objects on their life cycles and diachronic movement through space as advocated by Hoffman has reintegrated them into history as 'active' agents, removed from discussions of chronology or periodization. As noted by Cecily Hilsdale, this is particularly important for medieval silks which are often 'unattributed and unattributable',[101] shifting

98 Cremeens, 'Weaving Sanctity', pp. 24–25. Likewise, when Hugh of Lincoln was sent a piece of textile in which St Benedict had been buried, he distributed fragments to the abbot and several monks within his household. Bagnoli, 'Dressing the Relics', p. 107.

99 Reginald of Durham, *Libellus*, pp. 215–25.

100 Hoffman, 'Pathways of Portability', p. 42.

101 Hilsdale, 'Visual Culture', p. 309.

the paradigm for how silk can be read as a historical source. The movement of silk allowed it to accrue meaning through accumulated social memory acquired through cycles of reuse, layering new memories and meanings at each stage, as well as subverting those that came before. As Byzantine imperial silks began to circulate in Western Europe, particularly due to diplomatic connections, they manifested the political relationships between East and West, and the strategies used to project identity.

So, while there was clearly a wider appreciation of the significance of silk objects across the Mediterranean, the mechanisms through which silks were appreciated across cultures were contingent and nuanced, built on an articulation of antagonistic rivalry. Their reuse represented an inversion of their symbolic significance, one which would have only made sense if there had been an understanding of the original intention. But the means of redefining this significance was also important, at times both adaptive and destructive. This flexibility of meaning also allowed these silks to cross between political and religious spheres, widening their contextual potential. The associations of recycled silks with antiquity, holy figures, and divinely appointed rulers enabled them to become sanctified — and ultimately holy objects in their own right — visual representations of the glory of Christianity. Such transformative ability, and the associated cultural rituals that accompanied these transformations, made silks significant agents of both individual and communal identity. At each step in their cycles of reuse, the memory of previous meaning was necessary to activate new meaning. The accumulated social interaction resulting from these cycles, therefore, made silks crucial mediators between memory, identity, and the material world.

ABSTRACT The acts of recycling and reuse, circumstances of preservation, and modern attitudes towards medieval textiles have resulted in large chronological and geographical 'gaps' in the data available to modern scholars. As a result, discussions of textile mobility have tended to focus on the spread of styles and motifs rather than on the objects themselves, as the physical remains tend to lack context, or the social implications of these exchanges. One region of the medieval world, however, whose textiles survive in collections across the globe is Byzantium. This paper will trace the movement of Byzantine silk textiles from East to West to examine the processes through which they acquired new meaning outside of their original contexts, and perpetuated cycles of reuse and reinvention across cultures.

KEYWORDS Byzantium, Clergy, Diplomacy, Dress, Gift-Giving, Ideology, Silk, Textiles, Trade, Vestments, Western Europe

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JUDITH UTZ

Travelling Doors

Medieval Bronze Doors in the Mediterranean

Introduction

Medieval Byzantine bronze doors in Italy (second half of the eleventh century) have, up to now, been broadly studied from the angle of their iconography and historical context. Much less attention has been paid to the transcultural dimensions of the phenomenon — in part because it is hard, presumably, to imagine such heavy objects travelling.[1] Yet it is precisely the intended transportability that determined the form and structure of these doors. They consist of a number of panels and framing elements, as well as countless nails and rivets to fix the bronze panels onto a wooden support. Most of them were commissioned by Italian merchants with close ties to Constantinople, where the elements were cast and then shipped to Italy. As a group of objects, they are thus unique. There are no other known monumental bronzes that were made primarily for export to another region.[2] Nor were other architectural elements — apart from spolia — exported in the same rationalized way as the Byzantine bronze doors. Most of these doors can still be found today in the Italian cathedrals where they were installed in the Middle Ages, which points to their great importance for local communities.

* Many of the arguments and ideas formulated here emerged from discussions with my colleagues Marianne Mödlinger, Heike Schlie, Martin Fera, Jarno Bontadi, Marco Fellin, and Martino Negri in the course of the FWF project "Gates to Paradise. Creating Metal Doors for 11th–12th Century Churches" at the Paris Lodron University Salzburg. I would like to thank all of them most sincerely for stimulating exchanges. I would also like to warmly thank Julia Slater for subediting this text.

1 See Hoffman, 'Pathways of Portability'.

2 The case of the Magdeburg workshops in the twelfth century, which are known to have made a door for Płock Cathedral, may come close. Other than that, however, the process there does not seem to have been as streamlined as in Constantinople.

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Starting from this group of objects, in this essay I discuss the extent to which transportability can be understood as part of the materiality of an object. The artists of Constantinople were able to use local and regional models made of wood, and so the form of these doors is also the result of a change of material, possibly accompanied by a change in meaning. I therefore also explore similarities and differences in the affordances of medieval bronze doors.[3]

The Byzantine Bronze Doors in Italy

The oldest known written source on the phenomenon of Byzantine bronze doors on the Italian peninsula describes how the then abbot of Montecassino, Desiderius (in office 1058–1086), went to Amalfi in 1065 to obtain precious fabrics for the upcoming visit of Henry IV, the future Holy Roman Emperor. In the *Chronicle of Montecassino*, Leo of Ostia records the moment when Desiderius must have stood in front of the cathedral there, admiring the bronze doors, which were still quite new at that time. When he saw them, 'they delighted his eyes and shortly afterwards he sent the measurements of the old door of his abbey church to Constantinople along with the order to make one just like the one in Amalfi'.[4]

The door that was then made for the old building of the abbey church in Montecassino was actually modelled on the door in Amalfi. Both must originally have consisted of twenty-four flat panels, some of which had inlaid and nielloed representations of figures, while all the others had applied relief crosses (Fig. 2.1). In Amalfi, the four inlaid figures — Christ, the Madonna, St Andrew, and St Peter — still look out at those entering the building today, even though they have lost much of their inlaid decoration. The figures on the Montecassino door, on the other hand, are no longer visible. The panels of the door were reversed in 1123 by a successor of Abbot Desiderius, Oderisius II (1123–1126), in order to engrave a list of the monastery's possessions on them.[5] Since the door today has thirty-six panels and its dimensions are also different, it is obvious that the door has undergone further redesigns and adaptations.

It is not only through the *Chronicle of Montecassino* that the two sets of doors can be classified chronologically and geographically. Several inscriptions

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3 The concept of affordance has been increasingly used in cultural studies in recent years, starting with archaeology, to make the 'offering character' of objects tangible. This means that objects themselves offer options for action, e.g. a door invites you to walk through it, a chair invites you to sit on it, and so on. Affordance is therefore closely related to functionality. Fox and others, 'Affordanz'.

4 'Videns autem tunc portas aereas episcopii Amalfitani, cum valde placuissent oculis eius, mox mensuram portarum veteris ecclesiae Constantinopolim misit, ibique illas ut sunt fieri fecit. Nam nondum disposuerat ecclesiamo renovare, et ob hanc causam portae ipsae sic breves effectae sunt, sicut hactenus permanent', *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, III, 18, after Bloch, *Montecassino*, p. 139.

5 Bloch, 'Origin and Fate', p. 89.

Figure 2.1. Bronze door, Amalfi, Cathedral of Sant'Andrea, 1057/1060.
© Martin Fera / Reproduced by permission of Martin Fera.

Figure 2.2. Dedication inscription on one of the applied crosses at the door of Amalfi, Cathedral of Sant'Andrea, photo by the author.

on them provide information about the donor and the context of their manufacture. In Amalfi, one of the crosses bears an inscription that identifies the patron of the door as Pantaleone de Comite Maurone: 'Hoc opus fieri iussit pro redemptione anime sue Pantaleo filius Mauri de Pantaleone de Mauro de Maurone Comite' (Fig. 2.2). Another inscription on one of the elements of the central frame asks for forgiveness for his sins, a plea made in exchange for the act of endowing the door.[6]

Pantaleone was a rich merchant of the town at a time when Amalfi was one of the most important commercial centres in Italy. Amatus of Montecassino mentions the family in his *Historia Normannorum* and around the middle of the eleventh century they are said to have founded pilgrim hospitals in Jerusalem and Antioch.[7] It is not clear what their exact function was in trade with the Levant, but it is certain that their wealth must have come from these activities. In Constantinople itself they must also have been very well connected, as Greek sources refer to honorary Byzantine titles given

6 For both inscriptions see Bloch, *Montecassino*, pp. 140–41.

7 Micolani, 'Pantaleone de Comite Maurone', p. 351; see also Gargano, 'La nobiltà aristocratica amalfitana' pp. 57–101; Caputo, 'Mauro e Pantaleone de Comite Maurone', pp. 147–60.

to Pantaleone (*disypatos* and *patrikios*). It is also possible that a member of the family was present at the negotiations between the Eastern and Western Roman Churches in 1053/1054, which ultimately led to the Great Schism.[8]

Inscriptions on the door at Montecassino too, identify Pantaleone de Comite Maurone as the donor. On two panels in the lower register there are two dedicatory inscriptions which mention not only the donor but also the year of manufacture, 1066.[9] This would mean that the door was made immediately after Desiderius ordered it in 1065.[10]

Only from Leo of Ostia do we learn that both the door in Amalfi and the one in Montecassino were made in Constantinople. Given the Pantaleone family's close connections with that city and Amalfi's importance in its trade network, especially in the eleventh century, it is not surprising that the Italian port was instrumental in starting a tradition which perfectly demonstrated southern Italy's close ties to the Byzantine Empire in the decades that followed.

In 1070 another door was made in Constantinople for the Benedictine Abbey of San Paolo fuori le Mura (Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls) in Rome. Its fifty-four panels depicted the Twelve Great Feasts of the Orthodox Christian year (the *Dodekaorton*), as well as apostles, prophets, and saints. Unlike the two previous doors, the panels for the Roman door were decorated entirely in niello and coloured enamel, and the hands and heads of the figures were inlaid with silver, most of which has been lost. The fire in the basilica in 1823 severely damaged the door, and it was only after World War II that it was extensively restored. This door was also donated by the Amalfi merchant Pantaleone, as an inscription shows.[11] The door of the sanctuary of St Michael in Monte Sant'Angelo on Mount Gargano (1076) is another that owes its existence to Pantaleone and his wealth.[12] It is covered with coloured narrative scenes, ten of them representing the *Angelus Domini*, seven of them stories from the New Testament and six depict the lives of saints. Three of these show the three apparitions of the Archangel Michael to Bishop Laurentius of Sipont, telling the legend of the discovery and consecration of the sanctuary.

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8 Ristovska, 'Medieval Byzantium', pp. 374–77.

9 Bloch, 'Origin and Fate', p. 89.

10 For the exact dating of the door in Amalfi, see Milone, 'La data della porta di Amalfi', pp. 201–18.

11 Bazzani and Ristovska, 'Appendix: The Historical Inscriptions', pp. 425–29; Bloch, *Montecassino*, pp. 141–51.

12 Here, too, Pantaleone and the place of manufacture Constantinople are recorded in several inscriptions: 'Rogo vos om[nes] qui hic veni/tis causa orationis ut prius/ inspiciatis tam pulchrum/ laborem et sic intrantes/ precamini D[omi]n[u]m proni pro anima/ Pantaleonis qui fuit autor/ huius laboris […] and Hoc opus completum est in regia[m] urbem Constantinop[o]li adiubante d[omi]no. Pantaleone, qui eas fieri iussit anno ab incarnatione D[omi]ni millesimo septuagesimo sexto', Bloch, *Montecassino*, p. 152.

All three doors following the Amalfitan one are located at exceptional sacred locations, two linked to the Benedictine Order (Montecassino and Rome) and the other being at one of the most important sanctuaries and pilgrimage destinations in southern Italy (Monte Sant'Angelo).[13]

Other donors followed Pantaleone. The small door of the church of San Sebastiano de Platea in Atrani is quite similar to the one in Amalfi. It also consists of twenty-four panels, of which the four in the centre contain figural representations.[14] The donor — Pantaleone de Viarecta — is also named in an inscription.[15] Made in 1087, this door also came from Constantinople. Atrani is located a few kilometres from Amalfi; both cities were episcopal sees in the eleventh century. In the chapel to which the door probably originally granted admission, the dukes of the Republic of Amalfi were ceremoniously installed and communal assemblies were also held there.[16] The connections with Amalfi were very close. Similar circumstances must have led to the installation of a door at the Cathedral of San Matteo in Salerno. In this case the donor was Landolfo Butrumile, who is described in an inscription on the door as *protosebastos* — a high rank at the Byzantine imperial court.[17] Landolfo is first recorded as holding this title in 1085; the door in Salerno was possibly made at this time or shortly after. The donor and his wife are also represented on the door, kneeling before St Matthew, whose relics are kept in the cathedral.

Two sets of doors at the Cathedral of San Marco in Venice are special cases in that neither has any inscription providing information about donors or the context in which they were made. In the case of the smaller door, located in the Porta San Clemente — that is, at the entrance to the right aisle — local tradition claims that it came to Venice as a gift from Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118). It is more likely that the door was presented in lieu of the taxes paid by the Amalfitans to Venice. A bull of Alexios Komnenos of 1082 had given several privileges to the Venetians, including annual payments to be made to San Marco by Amalfitan workshops in Constantinople.[18] Stylistically, the door in the Porta San Clemente resembles that of San Paolo; in both cases the panels are adorned with figures inlaid in niello and silver,

13 Bloch, *Montecassino*, pp. 151–53; D'Ovidio, 'The Bronze Door of Monte Sant'Angelo', pp. 137–57.

14 Christ, the Mother of God, and the two saints Pantaleon and Sebastian, Gargano, 'Porta del S. Salvatore in Atrani', p. 293.

15 'Anno ab incarnaz[i]o[ne] D[omi]ni n[ost]ri Ie[s]u Xri[sti] millesi/mo octogesimo septi/mo mense februario // ind[i]c[tione] decima hoc opus fieri iussit Pant[aleo] fili[us] Pant[aleonis] Vi/arecta pro mercede anime s[ue] / et merita S. Sebasti[ani] martiris', Bloch, *Montecassino*, p. 153.

16 Gargano, 'Porta del S. Salvatore in Atrani', p. 293.

17 Landolfus is probably also to be identified with the *megas doux* Landulf, who is mentioned in the *Alexiad* and the Genoese *Annals of Caffaro*, Ristovska, 'Medieval Byzantium', p. 381.

18 Paribene ('La porta di San Clemente', p. 49) suggests that part of these dues took the form of the endowment of the door; Bevilacqua, 'Le porte ageminate bizantine della basilica', pp. 107–08.

and the ornamentation of the borders make the doors look as if they are decorated with gold filigree.

The second door in Venice differs from all the other Byzantine doors. It appears less finely worked and the panels are larger. The donor of the door is depicted here on a panel kneeling before St Mark with his name inscribed as 'Leo da Molino'. Leo da Molino was *procuratore* of San Marco between 1112 and 1138, which is why this door must have been made significantly later than all the other doors in the group.[19] It has often been argued that this second Venetian door should be considered a local copy of the first door there.[20] However, the large gap between the two dates makes it equally possible that this door was made in a different Constantinople workshop.[21]

Travelling Techniques

The comparison of the eight surviving Byzantine doors in Italy suggests connections between the workshops that produced them. Given the great stylistic and iconographic similarities between the doors of San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome and the older of the two in Venice, it is likely that both objects came from the same workshop. The great formal and technical similarities of all eight doors indicate that all the workshops and/or the artists must have been in close contact with each other. All eight doors are objects produced in one cultural context and intended to end up in another. Their story, from their production in Constantinople at the behest of Italian donors — named in inscriptions on many of them — to their final locations in Italian cities, is one of crossing cultural boundaries. This is the case not only of the doors but of the workshops as well. According to a document published in 1876, there was once another inscription on the door in Amalfi on a cross which no longer exists. An artist called Simeon immortalized himself in Greek and Latin: 'ΣΙΜΕΩΝ Π […] ΣΥΑ ΑΠΟΧΑ […] artifex huius laboris'.[22] There is something very similar in the door in Rome, as Natalija Ristovska discussed in an essay published a few years ago.[23] In the Roman case the signatures are 'Theodoros' written in Greek and 'Staurakios' written in Greek and Syriac, which points to the artistic and technical exchange between Byzantine

19 Matthiae, *Le porte bronzee*, p. 103; Bevilacqua, 'Le porte ageminate bizantine della basilica', pp. 109–13.

20 Matthiae, *Le porte bronzee*, p. 106; Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', pp. 152–53.

21 At this point I would like to refer once again to the FWF project "Gates to Paradise. Creating Metal Doors for 11th–12th Century Churches", which is dedicated to exactly these questions and has carried out material analyses on all bronze doors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Europe. The results for the two Venetian doors are already published, see Mödlinger and others, 'Multidisciplinary Analyses'.

22 See Milone, 'La data della porta di Amalfi', pp. 201–18; Braca, 'La porta di bronzo di Amalfi', p. 269.

23 Ristovska, 'Medieval Byzantium', pp. 364–445; Bloch, *Montecassino*, pp. 145–46.

workshops and the Levant, as well as to the way artists moved from place to place.[24] Both inscriptions were severely damaged in the fire of 1823, but have been handed down from a number of transcriptions.[25] The inscriptions by the two artists were positioned in the lower half of the left-hand door. The designer immortalized himself with the words 'O Saints Peter and Paul, come to the aid of your servant Theodoros, who designed these doors of yours',[26] while the metal worker addressed those viewing the doors as follows: 'This work was done by my hand, Staurakios, the metal caster; you who read this, pray also for me'.[27] Here, therefore, a distinction was made between the creative mind behind the work, possibly the man who made the wax mould, and the craftsman who produced the metal work.

Ristovska starts from the inscriptions to reconstruct the biography of the man calling himself 'Staurakios'. He uses the name Staurakios only in the Greek inscription, while in the Syriac version he goes by K.t.sh.g. or Khach'ik, which is the Armenian version of the Greek name Staurakios.[28] From this, Ristovska concludes that the artist must have come from an Armenian or Syrian-Armenian family. Furthermore, in Syriac he uses the Arabic word *ṣabbābā* to describe his craft. All these indications suggest that Staurakios must have come from a region in present-day southern Turkey or northern Iraq, possibly from near Antioch (now Antakya), Melitene (Malatya), or Amid (near Mosul), all of which were also important copper processing centres thanks to their nearby mines.[29] From there, Staurakios must at some point in his life have gone to Constantinople in order to work there.

Such transcultural biographies of artists and the mobility of craftsmen are normally very difficult to trace in individuals, but they were not unique. Metalworking was highly developed in the above-mentioned region, as is clear from the well-known treatise on metal art by Ismaʿīl ibn al-Razzāz al-Jazarī (1136–1206), the *Kitāb fī maʿrifat al-Hiyal al-handasīya* (*The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*, around 1205). Al-Jazarī also describes the production of a bronze door for the royal palace of Āmid near Mosul. This was formally very different from the products of the Byzantine workshops (see below), but technical similarities can be inferred.[30] The door of Āmid made by al-Jazarī was created using sand casting, a technique first described here: '[…] I made a wooden pattern for this plate […]. Then I made an impression of the pattern in sand in the casting box. I lifted out the pattern […]; melted

24 Utz, 'Tangible Eternity', pp. 19–40, esp. 33–34.
25 Ristovska, 'Medieval Byzantium', p. 365.
26 'ΑΓΙΕ / ΠΕΤΡΕ / ΚΕ ΠΑΥ/ΛΕ ΒΟΗ/ΘΕΙΤΕ / ΤΟΝ ΔΟΥ/ΛΟΝ / CAC / ΘΕΟΔΩ/ΡΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΓΡΑΜ/CONTA / ΤΑC ΠΥΛΑC CAC', trans. after Bloch, *Montecassino*, p. 146.
27 'Ἐχαμωθ[η] χειρι εμου Σταυ/ραχιυ του χυτου // Οι/αναγινωσχων/τες [*sic*] ευχεσθε χαι υπερ εμου', trans. after Bloch, *Montecassino*, p. 145.
28 Ristovska, 'Medieval Byzantium', p. 397.
29 Ristovska, 'Medieval Byzantium', pp. 397–406, 408–22, 428–29.
30 Wolters, 'Schriftquellen', p. 55; al-Jazarī, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. 191–92.

red copper and poured it thereon'.[31] After the bronze cooled down, the boxes only had to be taken apart and the finished bronze object polished.

According to the restorer Sergio Angelucci, the Byzantine bronze doors in southern Italy were also made using this technique, ensuring not only that the bronze panels would resemble each other, but also that production would be faster.[32] That sand casting was apparently widespread both in the Levant, as attested by al-Jazarī, and in the Byzantine Empire, points to further artistic and technical exchange processes in the region.

It is evident that the workshops of Constantinople could draw on technical traditions that extended far beyond the city's political sphere of influence. This still does not tell us much about the exact organization of the workshops there. We know of Pantaleone's close ties to Constantinople, but this does not allow us to draw any conclusions about whether the workshops were run by Byzantine masters or whether they were located in the city's Amalfitan quarters. The only clue to this might be found in the door of the Porta San Clemente in Venice, if it is true that it was used in lieu of the payments that the Amalfitans had to make to Venice. The bull of Alexios Komnenos mentioned above referred specifically to the Amalfitan workshops in Constantinople, which would suggest that the door was produced in one of them.

Further conclusions can be drawn from the shape of the doors, whose method of production was closely related to the need to ship them. All the Byzantine doors in Italy are made up of small, thin metal elements, which guaranteed easy transportability. The way the panels were made allowed the individual parts of the door to be manufactured in a workshop in Constantinople and then to be shipped to southern Italy, where they were mounted on a wooden support. Restoration work carried out on some of the doors has revealed the extent of this small-scale production: in Salerno, for example, no fewer than 546 nails were used to ensure the stability of the two halves of the door. Then came the individual panels, whose average weight in Salerno was only between ten and thirteen kilograms. The framework of doors was made up of numerous T-, L-, and H-shaped elements. Another special feature of the way these doors were made was that none of the elements was longer than 50 centimetres.[33] The implication is not only that the objects were created specifically for transportation, but also that smaller workshops in Constantinople were therefore able to produce them.

It is unclear whether artists or master craftsmen also travelled with the individual door components and supervised the correct assembly of the elements on site. On the other hand, the iconographies of the doors suggest that there must have been direct communication between Italian patrons and Byzantine craftsmen. Thus, the door in Salerno highlights the city's

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31 He also mastered the lost wax process, al-Jazarī, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. 194–95.

32 Vona, 'Le porte', p. 380; Angelucci, 'Le valve della speranza', p. 254.

33 Braca, 'Tecnologia metallica', p. 263.

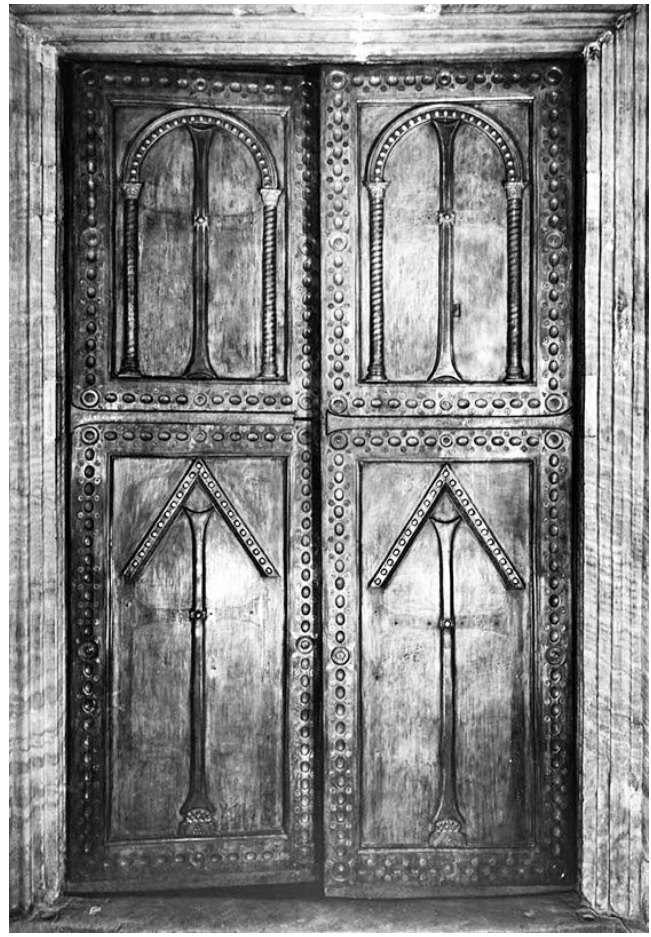

Figure 2.3. Bronze door, Istanbul, central door of the exonartex of the Hagia Sophia, sixth century, Constantinople. © Byzantine Institute and Dumbarton Oaks fieldwork records and papers, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC.

patron saint, St Matthew; likewise, the locally significant saints Pantaleon and Sebastian appear on the door in Atrani. Several Venetian saints are to be seen on the second door in Venice. This could point to a Venetian workshop in Constantinople that combined Byzantine-Levantine metalworking techniques with Venetian knowledge.

Something else that points to foreign workshops and indicates that the objects of this shape and structure seem to have been created solely for export is the fact that such doors are neither preserved nor mentioned directly in written sources for Constantinople itself; the doors there differ from the Byzantine doors in Italy.

In the Hagia Sophia several bronze doors from Justinian's time have survived, all modelled more or less on ancient Roman doors. These were either solidly cast (as in the case of the door of San Giovanni in Fonte from Late Antiquity)[34] or consist of very large bronze sheets fixed to wooden cores

34 It was donated by Pope Hilarius (461–468), Mende, *Die Bronzetüren des Mittelalters*, 2nd edn, p. 18.

(such as the door of the Curia Julia, which has been in the main portal of Saint John Lateran since 1660).[35] In Istanbul, the central door of the exonartex of the Hagia Sophia consists of four individual sections. They are each decorated with an applied cross, although all now lack the crossbars — these were probably removed after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 (Fig. 2.3).[36] Another bronze door in the Hagia Sophia, which since 841 has borne the monograms of Emperors Theophilos and Michael II and Empress Irene, is even more reminiscent of its models in ancient Rome.[37] Other Byzantine doors have survived only in written sources. In the *Alexiad*, Anna Comnena describes doors clad with silver panels in the Chalkoprateia church complex. She also writes of how they were melted down in 1082: 'A certain Leo was then Bishop of Chalcedon […]. When the gold and silver on the doors of the Chalcoprateia were being taken away, he appeared in public and spoke freely […]'.[38] For his part, Nicetas Choniates writes that the Great Palace had several silver and bronze doors dating from the time of the emperors Theophilos (829–842) and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913–959).[39] The structure of these doors is not recorded; they may have resembled the Justinian doors. However, the Chalkoprateia door most probably exhibited a narrative cycle as Nicetas Choniates describes the door as being decorated with depictions of the Great Feasts.[40] The presence of bronze doors as part of the Byzantine imperial furnishings from Late Antiquity onwards is exemplified by the case of the so-called *Chalke*, the main vestibule of the Imperial Palace, which got its name from a monumental bronze door placed at the entry.[41]

The fact that so few precious metal objects have survived in Constantinople is largely due to the conquests and lootings of the city, especially in 1204 and 1453. Unlike the quadriga now on the façade of San Marco, doors may have been considered less worthy of preservation, which is why they were less often taken elsewhere as booty. Doors did not necessarily have the same prestige as monumental sculptural works, which is probably why most of them were simply melted down.

Other than the Justinian doors, only two medieval doors from the Byzantine Empire have survived, both on Mount Athos, in the Grand Lavra Monastery[42] and in Vatopedi.[43] The Vatopedi door, located at the entrance to the *katholikon*, is from a later date than the Byzantine doors in Italy. It consists

35 Vlad Borrelli, 'La porta del Pantheon', pp. 11–22.
36 Bertelli, 'Le porte del VI secolo', pp. 109–19.
37 Matthiae, *Le porte bronzee*, pp. 23–24.
38 Ristovska 'Medieval Byzantium', p. 379; Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, Book V, II, trans. E. R. A. Sewter, pp. 158–59.
39 Ristovska, 'Medieval Byzantium', p. 379; Miller, 'Fragment inédit', pp. 33–42.
40 Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', p. 156.
41 Mango, *The Brazen House*.
42 Bouras, 'The Byzantine Bronze Doors', pp. 229–50.
43 Bréhier, *La sculpture*, pl. L recalls one of the Islamic doors.

of small panels engraved with floral ornamentation and therefore differs in technique and iconography from the examples discussed so far. For the door of the Grand Lavra Monastery, on the other hand, Margaret Frazer assumes it was produced at the beginning of the eleventh century.[44] Each of the two wings consists of four square compartments made of embossed bronze sheets (Fig. 2.4). The top section of each door features a foliate cross surrounded by four medallions. The remaining areas below are dominated by a central medallion, possibly inlaid or nielloed. All eight panels were made individually and were then attached to a wooden core using the framework elements and nails.[45] The frame is covered all over with floral elements and interconnected medallions. Two lion-head door pulls, placed in the centre, allow the two halves of the door to open and close. The door in the Monastery of the Grand Lavra is thus closest to the Byzantine imported doors — probably because it is itself an 'import door'. Again, the structure and manufacturing technique of the two halves could be closely related to the destination of the object which needed to be shipped. Foundries may have existed on Mount Athos, but on a smaller scale, so it is possible that in this case, too, larger objects were created elsewhere and then brought to the Holy Mountain by ship. The Italian doors from Constantinople further refined this process by making the individual elements even smaller. The transport of the objects in itself did not lead to a reinterpretation of them; their structure was designed specifically for ease of shipping. On the other hand, this structure demonstrates how different ideas and techniques from the Mediterranean area were adapted for the new destination. This will be examined more closely in what follows.

Instead of drawing inspiration from ancient local doors, in the following centuries Italian door production was dominated by the Byzantine scheme of small plates, surrounded by soldered metal frames, all applied to a wooden support. The workshops of Barisanus of Trani (late twelfth century) and Bonannus of Pisa (late twelfth century) followed it, as did the slightly earlier workshop of Oderisius of Benevento (mid-twelfth century). In some cases, such as Bonannus and Barisanus, the 'transport effect' may have applied as well, for example when they made the doors for the cathedral of Monreale.[46] An additional advantage was that this technique was more economical in terms of materials, as the panels could be thinner. The doors themselves were much lighter thanks to the wooden core, which allowed for larger ensembles. Casting was also much easier to handle when divided between a number of small elements. There was less risk of the bronze cooling too quickly and leading to material damage. Another advantage of the 'Byzantine scheme' should also be noted: dividing the surface into several small compartments, as dictated by the production process, facilitated an overall decoration with narrative

44 Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', p. 154, fig. 14.
45 Bouras, 'The Byzantine Bronze Doors', p. 234.
46 Mende, *Die Bronzetüren des Mittelalters*, 2nd edn, pp. 94–110.

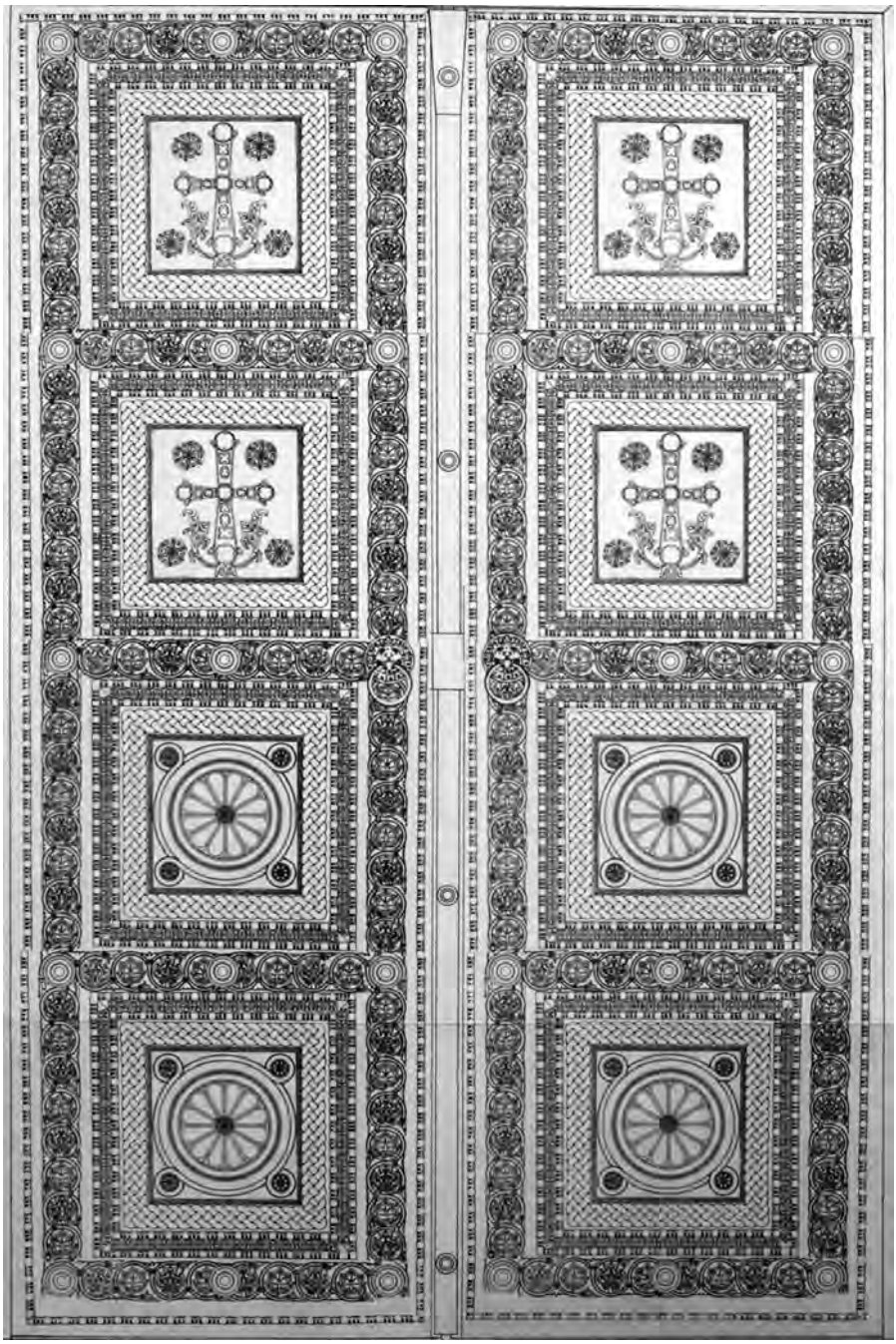

Figure 2.4. General disposition of the bronze door of the Great Lavra Monastery, eleventh century. Bouras, 'The Byzantine bronze doors', Fig. 1, reproduced by permission of the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

scenes and figural depictions. This may have been one of the decisive reasons why Renaissance doors continued to be inspired by Byzantine doors — even if possibly only indirectly.

It is generally known that when Andrea Pisano (1290–1348) cast the first doors of the Florentine Baptistery he based his work on the Pisan doors of Bonannus. The archives of the Arte di Calimala, the Florentine guild of cloth merchants, tell us that Piero d'Iacopo was sent to Pisa to draw the medieval doors of the cathedral and then to look for a suitable metal caster in Venice.[47] Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378–1455) was subsequently to use Pisano's door as a model for the bronze doors that he designed to complete the decoration of the Florentine Baptistery, so that his work too can be said to follow in the long tradition of Byzantine bronze doors.

Wooden and Bronze Doors in the Mediterranean

The Byzantine doors enjoyed a resounding success. But the origin of this 'new' way of constructing bronze doors has so far rarely been questioned. It indicates exchanges of media and materials in the medieval Mediterranean, as the closest comparative examples are to be found in Coptic wooden sanctuary screens. In an essay as early as 1973 Frazer referred to Orthodox iconostases and choir screens as possible models for the choice of form in Byzantine bronze doors.[48]

Some Coptic examples have survived from the tenth and eleventh centuries. One of the oldest doors is found in the Wadi El Natrun (Egypt), in the Church of El Adra (Fig. 2.5). Like the Byzantine doors, this sanctuary screen is decorated mostly with ornamental panels but also contains some figural ones, especially in the upper row, where prophets and apostles can be found. The individual wooden panels are held inside a frame that forms the coffered structure of the door. Inscriptions provide valuable clues to the dating of the objects to the years 913/914 and 926/927.[49] The doors gave access to the sanctuary (*haikal*) and to the choir.

The Wadi El Natrun sanctuary screens represent an early stage in the transition to the iconostasis. Iconostases developed from the templon, an artificial barrier that separated the space of the clergy from that of the laity. In the early Christian period and until the ninth century these were mostly low barriers made of marble with columns, on which an architrave rested,

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47 '6 Nov. 1329. Si delibera che le porte della Chiesa di S. Giovanni si faccino di metallo o otone, più belle che si può, e che Piero d'Iacopo vadia a Pisa a vedere quelle che sono in detta città e le ritragga, e dipoi vadia a Venezia a cercare di maestro che le faccia, e trovandolo, che lui deva essere il maestro a lavorare la forma di detta porta di metallo etc.', quoted in Moskowitz, *Sculpure of Andrea and Nino Pisano*, p. 198.

48 Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', pp. 150–56.

49 Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', pp. 151 ff.

Figure 2.5. Wooden door, Wadi Natron, Der es Surian, Church of El Adra, detail, 926/927, © Howard Middleton-Jones / Reproduced by permission of Howard Middleton-Jones.

but subsequently higher and more closed forms developed that were made of wood. Textiles, and later icons, were hung between the columns, but for a long time the architrave was the primary area for images.[50] Here, too, pictorial decoration was rare until the thirteenth century. Up to that time the templon was dominated mainly by ornamental decoration, including crosses. The images most used were the *Deisis* — Christ in majesty, flanked by the Virgin and John the Baptist — positioned in the centre, and the *Dodekaorton*. The templa were increasingly made of wood, making it easier to attach images.[51]

Other Coptic wooden doors survive in the Wadi El Natrun, for example in the Church of Sitt Miriam, and in Deir Anba Bishoy and Deir Abu Maqar.[52] Other known Coptic wooden doors are in the Cairo churches of Sitt Barbara[53]

50 See also Weitzmann, 'Die byzantinischen Elfenbeine', pp. 11–20.

51 Thümmel, *Ikonologie der christlichen Kunst*, pp. 135, 143–44; Felicetti-Liebenfels, 'Entstehung und Bilderprogramm', p. 51. On the development of the iconostasis from the templon see Chatzidakis, 'L'évolution de l'icône', pp. 333–66.

52 Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries*, e.g., pl. XLVII, LXIV, LXXVII.

53 Pauty, *Bois sculptés*, pl. I, XVI.

Figure 2.6. Panel from a wooden door, Palermo, Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, twelfth century, photo by the author.

Figure 2.7. Wooden door, Bethlehem, Church of Nativity, 1227 © Franziska Schneider / Reproduced by permission of Franziska Schneider.

and of Abu Saifain,[54] as well as in Bawit to the south of Cairo.[55] They all contain carved figures of prophets and apostles. The stylistic and technical proximity of Coptic and Fatimid woodcarving has often been pointed out, so it is not surprising that Fatimid wooden doors could be designed in a very similar way — without figural representations of course.[56] Of these, often only individual panels have survived, but they can be attributed with great certainty to doors. Examples of these can be found in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, the oldest of which dates from the beginning of the eleventh century.[57] The surviving Fatimid doors come mostly from mosques and were connected to the miḥrāb — and thus had a function similar to that of orthodox sanctuary screens.

Wooden doors are easier to transport than bronze doors. Therefore, it is not surprising that they have not only found their way into museums in modern times, but they already circulated in the Mediterranean region in pre-modern times.[58] An example of this can be found in Palermo. A wooden door, in part possibly from the twelfth century, is still to be seen in Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio where it may at one time have been installed at the entrance to the little church (Fig. 2.6). The donor of the building, George of Antioch, had a transcultural background, and the furnishings of the church are to be read in the same context. The ornamentation of the wooden door is stylistically so similar to Fatimid and Coptic woodcarving that it is possible that the door itself came from Egypt.[59] According to al-Maqrīzī, George was sent to Egypt several times between 1115 and 1125 as ambassador of the Count of Sicily — who later reigned as King Roger II (1130–1154) — and it is possible that he became a kind of link to the Fatimid court which would have facilitated a transfer of objects.[60]

There is a similar example in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Above the main entrance to the nave is a wooden door, which can be dated to 1227, when the region was under Islamic rule (Fig. 2.7). It survives only in fragments. Here, too, the panels were each carved individually and then fastened to a wooden support. At the top of each of the two wings is an inscription. On the left one, written in Arabic, it says: 'This door was finished with the help of God, be He exalted, in the days of our Lord the Sultan

54 Pauty, *Bois sculptés*, pl. XVII, XXXIV.

55 Rutschowscaya, *Catalogue des bois*, nos 350, 351, 539.

56 See the door from Qalawun (eleventh cent.), al-Fann al-Islāmī and Pauty, *Catalogue général*, pl. XXXIX.

57 al-Fann al-Islāmī and Pauty, *Catalogue général*, pl. XXIII.

58 Hunt, 'The al-Muʿallaqa Doors', pp. 61–77.

59 Deir Anba Bishoy and Deir Abu Maqar, see Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries*, pl. XXVII, XLVII. In this case, a dendrochronological determination of the panels in question in Palermo could provide important new insights.

60 According to the *Kitab al-Muqaffa* by the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (1361–1441), Houben, *Roger II*, p. 197.

al-Malik al-Mu'azzam in the month of Muharram in the year 624'. The one on the right reads in Armenian: 'The door of the Blessed Mother of God was made in the year 676 by the hands of Father Abraham and Father Arakel in the time of Hethum son of Constantine, King of Armenia. God have mercy on their souls'.[61] It must have stood at the entrance to the Church of the Nativity at least as early as 1422, as is clear from a pilgrimage report. The two upper surviving panels contain foliate crosses with rich lacework, whereas the two lower panels are dominated by interlace ornamentation alone. According to Zehava Jacoby, this door differs stylistically from known Armenian wooden doors and represents, rather, 'Levantine' aesthetics. The object points to Armenian artists, but it is totally unclear whether the door was imported or made locally.[62]

It was not only the easy transportability of wooden coffered doors, but ancient tradition was also a reason why they could be found throughout the Mediterranean area. For Christian places of worship especially, the individual panels and coffers were eminently suitable for images, as is demonstrated by the surviving works from Santa Sabina in Rome, St Mary's in the Capitol in Cologne, Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, and in the Monastery of St Catherine in the Sinai.[63] This most certainly goes back to an ancient Roman tradition, which is why it is not surprising that we know of similarly structured wooden doors throughout the area once ruled by Rome, including the Levant and North Africa.

However, preserved *bronze* doors from Islamic areas differ formally from the examples discussed so far. Tom Nickson has devoted an essay to the Door of Forgiveness (Puerta del Perdón) in Seville, which must have been made around 1200. It is entirely covered with small hexagonal panels adorned with inscriptions (Fig. 2.8). Although the panels on this door are also on a wooden support, it is formally very different from the Byzantine doors. Nickson notes the repetitive pattern of the door, which transfixes the viewer. The door in Āmid described by al-Jazarī in the *Kitāb fī maʿrifat al-Hiyal al-handasīya* had star-shaped ornamentation and might have been very similar to a door from the Friday Mosque at Jazīrat ibn ʿUmar on the Tigris, now in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul.[64]

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61 Jacoby, 'The Medieval Doors', pp. 126–27; see also Hunt, 'The al-Muʿallaqa Doors', p. 64.

62 Jacoby, 'The Medieval Doors', pp. 129, 133.

63 Bahat, 'The Doors of the Monastery', pp. 135–37.

64 Ristovska, 'Medieval Byzantium', p. 411. Other doors can be found in Cairo, for example in the complex of Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (1284–1286, entrance door), in the madrasa or house of Amir Mankutamur (1296/1297, entrance door) or in the madrasa of Sultan al-Nāsir Hassan (1356–1360, entrance door, now in the mosque of Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh), Mols, 'Mamluk Metalwork', nos 53–75. Only the door of the mosque of al-Salih Tala'i (1160, now in Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art) can be dated to the twelfth century.

Figure 2.8. Bronze door, Seville, Seville Cathedral, Puerta del Perdón, *c.* 1200, photo by Jean Laurent, *c.* 1870. © Image taken from the holdings of the Biblioteca Nacional de España (CC BY).

Local Affordances

Objects and ideas crossed the seas; however, in the case of the Byzantine bronze doors, the idea of the form united different shores, while local affordances differed and were adapted each time to new ritual contexts. This becomes especially clear if we compare the Byzantine doors in Italy and their probable models, sanctuary screens in Byzantium. The functional change probably coincided with liturgical adaptations which are difficult to reconstruct today due to the lack of written records. Even if the iconostasis in today's sense did not yet exist, one has to ask how medieval Italian believers reacted to what was actually an 'Orthodox' object — if the doors were indeed perceived in this way — and this so shortly after the Schism of 1054. The number of Orthodox believers in southern Italy was relatively high compared to the rest of the peninsula, as many parts of southern Italy were part of the Byzantine Empire until the eleventh century.[65]

As Frazer has shown, choir screens in Byzantium and the Byzantine doors in Italy share iconographic similarities. The foliate cross is particularly common on the Italian doors and also appears on choir screens and doors throughout the Christian Mediterranean and beyond.[66] On the Justinian doors of the Hagia Sophia and on the bronze door of the Monastery of the Grand Lavra on Mount Athos, they are used to decorate individual compartments, as they are on the set of wooden doors of Armenian provenance in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, where they are represented standing on Mount Golgotha.

The cross, symbolizing Christ's sacrificial death from which new life emerges, functioned as a symbol of redemption, as did the doors themselves. Placed at the threshold of the sacred space — or the most sacred, in the case of choir screens — the door also pointed the way to redemption for each individual. While on a symbolic level the door evoked comparable associations throughout Christendom, liturgical differences must have existed. For the door in Salerno, wedding rituals are documented for the thirteenth century that were specifically related to the bronze doors.[67] However, it is no longer possible to understand the decisive role played by the Salerno door in particular, or the other Byzantine doors in Italy, in specific rituals.

In the ceremonial book of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (tenth century), the moment when the emperor entered the Hagia Sophia can be associated liturgically with the entry into the presbytery. The emperor

> having approached the imperial door, candle in hand, makes three deep bows rendering thanks to God during the patriarch's prayers. He then

65 On the Orthodox presence in southern Italy, see Ramseyer, *The Transformation of a Religious Landscape*.

66 Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', pp. 154–55.

67 Vaccaro, 'Gli spazi liturgici', p. 182.

> enters the nave and proceeds to the holy door in the chancel screen. Again with candles he bows three times giving thanks to God before entering the sanctuary.[68]

But it must be remembered here that the imperial ceremonial in the church of Hagia Sophia cannot be transferred to other Byzantine churches, and even less to southern Italian churches. In general, too little is known about the extent to which Byzantine doors were incorporated into specific rites. Traditions about this mostly refer to practices dating from much later, and which, moreover, are to be understood rather in the context of private devotion.[69]

It seems that the Schism of 1054 was not particularly significant in the minds of contemporary believers. For example, orthodox chants and liturgical elements were still part of the local liturgy well into the fifteenth century, including at Salerno.[70] In the second half of the eleventh century, an appreciation of Byzantine craftsmanship in general is evident in the new buildings of the abbey church of Montecassino, and not only in the importation of the doors.[71] The *Chronicle of Montecassino* records that Abbot Desiderius also ordered a silver sanctuary screen from Constantinople for his new building. Leo of Ostia describes it as consisting of six silver columns with five icons in the spaces between them. The architrave was decorated with another thirteen icons. The number indicates that there was most probably a *Dodekaorton* and an *Anastasis* here, which would suggest that Montecassino had a templon, in exactly the same way as in an Orthodox church.[72]

Another aspect seems to have been particularly decisive, which not only led to the development of the iconostasis in the Byzantine area, but also explains the popularity of the Byzantine export doors. The representation of the *Deisis*, as it is found on many of these doors surrounded by apostles and prophets or narrative scenes, acted as direct intercessors for the believers.[73]

Furthermore, the doors in the Mediterranean area were connected by semantic and aesthetic levels of meaning. It is intriguing to consider to what extent ancient semantics of bronze, such as its association with eternity, and also with imperial power, survived in different cultures and opened up new, transcultural perspectives. Metal doors were already charged with special meaning in classical times and were used only for particularly sacred places.

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68 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Le Livre des Cérémonies*, I, ch. 1, pp. 11–12, after Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', p. 151.

69 D'Ovidio, 'The Bronze Door of Monte Sant'Angelo', pp. 137–38 refers to the kissing of the door, which, however, has only been documented for the post-medieval period.

70 Vaccaro, 'Gli spazi liturgici', p. 182; Kelly, 'La musica, la liturgia e la tradizione', pp. 188–212.

71 *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, III, 27, ed. H. Hoffmann, p. 396.

72 The *anastasis* usually acts as the 13th image in this context, Felicetti-Liebenfels, 'Entstehung und Bilderprogramm', p. 54; Schlosser, *Quellenbuch*, p. 207. Also for Rome, the *Liber Pontificalis* testifies for the eighth-century *templa*, which were equipped with images on the architrave: Thümmel, ed., *Ikonologie der christlichen Kunst*, p. 143.

73 Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', pp. 147–48.

In the second book of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid describes the silver door of the palace of the sun god and its special craftsmanship.[74] The golden doors of Solomon's temple are described in the first Book of Kings.[75] Golden church doors can be placed in this tradition. A long inscription on the presumably gilded doors of the Cathedral of St Denis, near Paris, commissioned by Abbot Suger (1122–1151), referred to their material — and their materiality.[76] And bronze doors were also understood as shimmering like gold. This is clear in the case of the door in Gniezno in Poland, dating from the 1170s, which is described in sources as *porta aurea*.[77]

However, the desired aesthetic effect of the gold gleam is most evident in the Byzantine doors in Italy. Those were not made of bronze, a copper-tin alloy, but of brass — an alloy of copper and zinc called *aurichalcum* since ancient times. Isidore of Seville wrote about it as follows: '*Aurichalcum* is so called because it has both the lustre of gold and the hardness of bronze'.[78] *Aurichalcum* was understood as a special type of bronze. Another example is the central door of the narthex of Hagia Sofia which is made of an alloy averaging 72 per cent copper, 19 per cent zinc, 2.4 per cent tin, 2.2 per cent lead, and 3.4 per cent iron. The exported doors thus follow in a local craft tradition.[79]

An inscription on the door of Monte Sant'Angelo stresses the desirability of this lustre: 'I request and ask you, Rectors of Saint Michael, that you let these doors be polished once a year, as we have now shown, so that they will always be shining and shimmering'.[80] The inscription has preserved a unique instruction for the treatment of such doors.[81] The golden gleam on the doors, at the threshold of the sacred space, may have prepared the faithful for what they would find after passing through them. The shining surface may thus have contributed to the redemptive potential of the doors, which also played a central role in their iconography. In Salerno, both aspects are once again particularly emphasized. On the one hand, there is the unusual representation

74 Ov. Met. 2.1.

75 '[…] And the pins on which the doors were turned, the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and the doors of the Temple, all of gold', Kings 1, 7. 50.

76 Speer and Binding, *Abt Suger von Saint-Denis*, p. 324; Reudenbach, 'Panofsky', pp. 137–50. In the writings of Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis in particular, the example of Solomon's Temple is mentioned repeatedly.

77 The sources date to the seventeenth century. The alloy consists of *c.* 88 per cent Cu, *c.* 9 per cent Sn, and 3 per cent Pb, being thus not brass, but bronze, Mende, *Die Bronzetüren des Mittelalters*, p. 164.

78 'Aurichalcum dictum quod et splendorem auri et duritiam aeris possideat', Isid. *Etym*. XVI. 20. 3.

79 Bertelli, 'Notizia preliminare', p. 102. The FWF project 'Gates to Paradise. Creating Metal Doors for 11th–12th Century Churches' therefore also aims to reconstruct the original colours and the aesthetic impression made by these medieval bronze doors.

80 'Rogo et adiuro rectores Sancti angeli Michaelis, ut semel in anno detergere faciatis has portas, sicuti nos nunc ostendere fecimus, ut sint semper lucide et clare', Bloch, *Montecassino*, p. 153.

81 See Utz, 'Tangible Eternity', p. 28.

of the *fons vitae*, which refers to the baptismal event and thus to rebirth.[82] The theme of light embodied in the door is taken up again in one of the panels: Christ, surrounded by an arcade, holds an open book in his hands, in which the beginning of John 8. 12 can be read: 'I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall wander in the dark; he shall have the light of life.'[83]

The associations that the golden gleam of Byzantine doors in particular created through their special material composition were probably the reason for their great success in southern Italy. The bronze doors made in Italy from the twelfth century onwards were mostly made of a copper-tin alloy, which had other colour qualities.[84] It is obvious that the golden shimmer gave the Byzantine doors a special prestige and made them appear particularly valuable.

This may have played a role in the entire Mediterranean region and may have contributed to the popularity of the material in the Islamic region as well. The door in Seville, for example, which originally stood in the mosque, has an inscription on the right-hand door knocker, based on Qur'an 24: 36–37, the 'Sura of Light'.[85] This suggests that medieval bronze doors were perceived similarly throughout the Mediterranean area.

Conclusion: Translocated Doors

Against the background of the medieval bronze doors of the Mediterranean region, the Byzantine doors in Italy stand out for two reasons. First, as a group they are relatively completely preserved, which is often not the case — especially for medieval bronze objects — due to the reusability of the material. From this point of view, we can observe a case of resistance to acts of repurposing, most likely due to the continuous functional stability of the doors across the centuries. We have knowledge of only one of these doors which did not survive the test of time, and which helps us shed light on a specific case of door translocation — war loot. In Pisan sources from the sixteenth century there is talk of a door inlaid with silver, which is said to have arrived in the maritime republic around 1100 as a gift from the crusader Godfrey of Bouillon.[86] It was probably located in the west façade of the Cathedral of Pisa, where it was destroyed in the fire of 1595, along with two other doors. The main portal of the west façade had a bronze door from the workshop of Bonannus of Pisa; the third door is said to have been loot from Mallorca, stolen by Pisan fleets in 1114 or 1116. However, it is not known whether this one was made

82 Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', pp. 160–62; D'Anzilio, 'Il *Fons Vitae*', pp. 59–64.

83 Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise', p. 161.

84 Mödlinger and others, 'Quantitative Comparisons'. For the alloys of the Italian doors see appendix in Mende, *Die Bronzetüren des Mittelalters*.

85 Nickson, '"Sovereignty belongs to God"', p. 847.

86 Erffa, 'Das Programm der Westportale', pp. 55–56.

of bronze or of wood. The fact that doors functioned as trophies is proved by other examples, such as the two doors, probably from Almería, which were brought to Genoa in the twelfth century.[87] Not only doors, but entire portals were sometimes relocated, as evidenced by the Gothic portal from Acre, which can be found today at the entrance of the *madrasa*-mausoleum of Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad in Cairo.[88] Doors and portals could obviously be valuable trophies, especially if they were placed in locations that were charged with certain meanings, for example at the entrance to magnificent sacred or civil buildings. Taking booty was a demonstration of power on the part of the conquerors, both politically and religiously.

Another reason why the Byzantine doors in Italy are so special is precisely that they were created for export as this paper has shown. While their creation most likely involved a change of material compared to previous models such as the sanctuary screens, which in turn connected them to Egypt and the Levant, from their inception they were designed to be moved. The intention to enhance their transportability influenced the way they were made, with all the components being produced separately. The same was in fact also true of much smaller objects that were made in the Holy Land for export to the West.[89] Many of these items have also survived, especially in Italian church treasuries.

The comparison with trophies from raids focuses on associations with the place the objects were taken from, or, in this case, where they were made. Almost all the doors refer in inscriptions to Constantinople as the city where they were made. The donors had a range of motives, certainly that of displaying their own wealth and the scope of their influence, but also of expressing private devotion. In most cases, inscriptions on the doors ask those entering to pray for the salvation of the donor. Furthermore, the high level of craftsmanship to be found in Constantinople and the innovative artists who gathered there certainly played a role. This was the standard set for the artistic decoration of church buildings, as the example of the new building in Montecassino shows. The Byzantine doors, which were imported into Italy in the eleventh century and occasionally later, combine all these aspects. In addition, the shimmering golden brilliance of the objects, as well as their iconography, promised salvation to those entering and the mediation needed to achieve this. In fact, while the precise reconstruction of the local liturgical uses of such doors is challenging, they were all interconnected on a fundamental semantic level, as the consistency of their form was a result of the production and exportation process.

87 Calderoni Masetti, *Intrecci Mediterranei*, pp. 18–19.
88 Jacoby, 'Crusader Sculpture in Cairo', pp. 121–38.
89 Hoffman, 'Christian-Islamic Encounters', pp. 129–42.

ABSTRACT The bronze doors made in Constantinople for some Italian churches in the eleventh and twelfth centuries are a special case among monumental bronzes. They were created solely for export, which is why their technical method of production, and thus their form, is based on considerations of transportability. Models for them can be found in Constantinople itself in the bronze doors made for the Hagia Sophia and also in Coptic wooden doors in Egypt. Other features, such as choir screens, are also considered here. The paper traces the technical and thus aesthetic peculiarities of Byzantine doors in Italy from a transcultural perspective and also asks about their local affordances.

KEYWORDS Bronze doors, Constantinople, southern Italy, artistic techniques, transcultural studies, materiality

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MARIA VITTORIA COMACCHI

Arabic Geography and Sixteenth-Century Cartography

Guillaume Postel and the History of Abū al-Fidā''s Manuscript

Introduction

In a letter dated 9 April 1567, addressed to Brabantian cartographer Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598), French scholar Guillaume Postel (1510–1581) makes explicit reference to Ortelius's first-ever published chart of Asia, the *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio* (*New Description of Asia, the Widest Part of the Globe*), printed in Antwerp in 1567 (Fig. 3.1), and reprinted soon after by Donato Bertelli in Venice.[1] The letter leaves little doubt about the significance Postel attributes to Ortelius's cartographical projection of Asia:[2]

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1 See Almagià, *Monumenta cartographica vaticana*, II, pp. 63–66.

2 In the transcriptions of Latin and French vernacular texts, I have silently expanded all abbreviations, standardized punctuation, and regularized spellings u/v and i/j according to modern usage. All English translations of Latin, Italian, and French vernacular texts are mine. Unless otherwise specified, words or brief phrases enclosed in square brackets in the English translations have been added to clarify the English text. In the English translations of primary sources, authors' names and works in Arabic are spelled according to the original Latin spelling.

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Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean, ed. by Beatrice Falcucci, Emanuele Giusti, and Davide Trentacoste, HIMO 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2024), pp. 103–132
BREPOLS PUBLISHERS 10.1484/M.HIMO-EB.5.138215

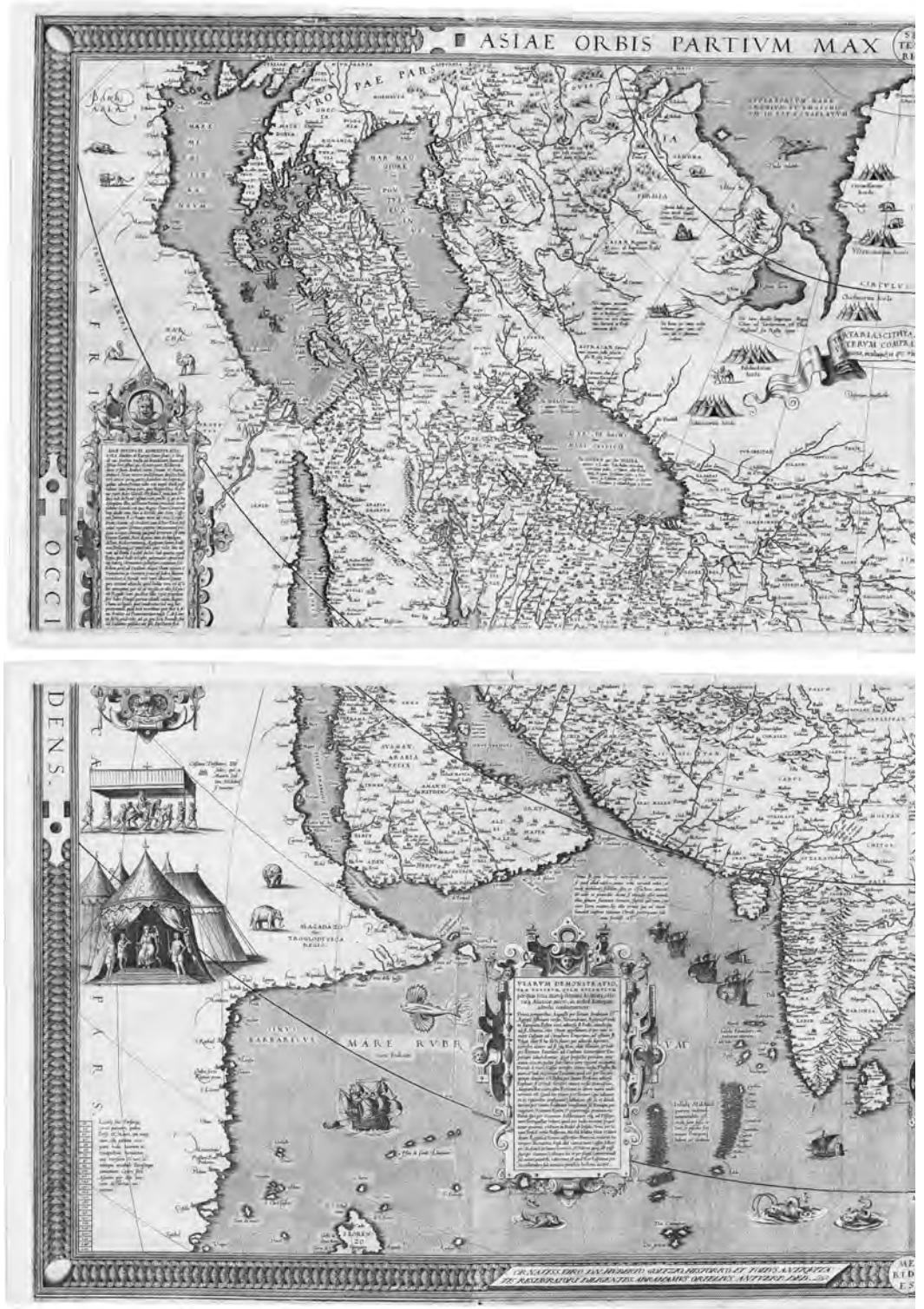
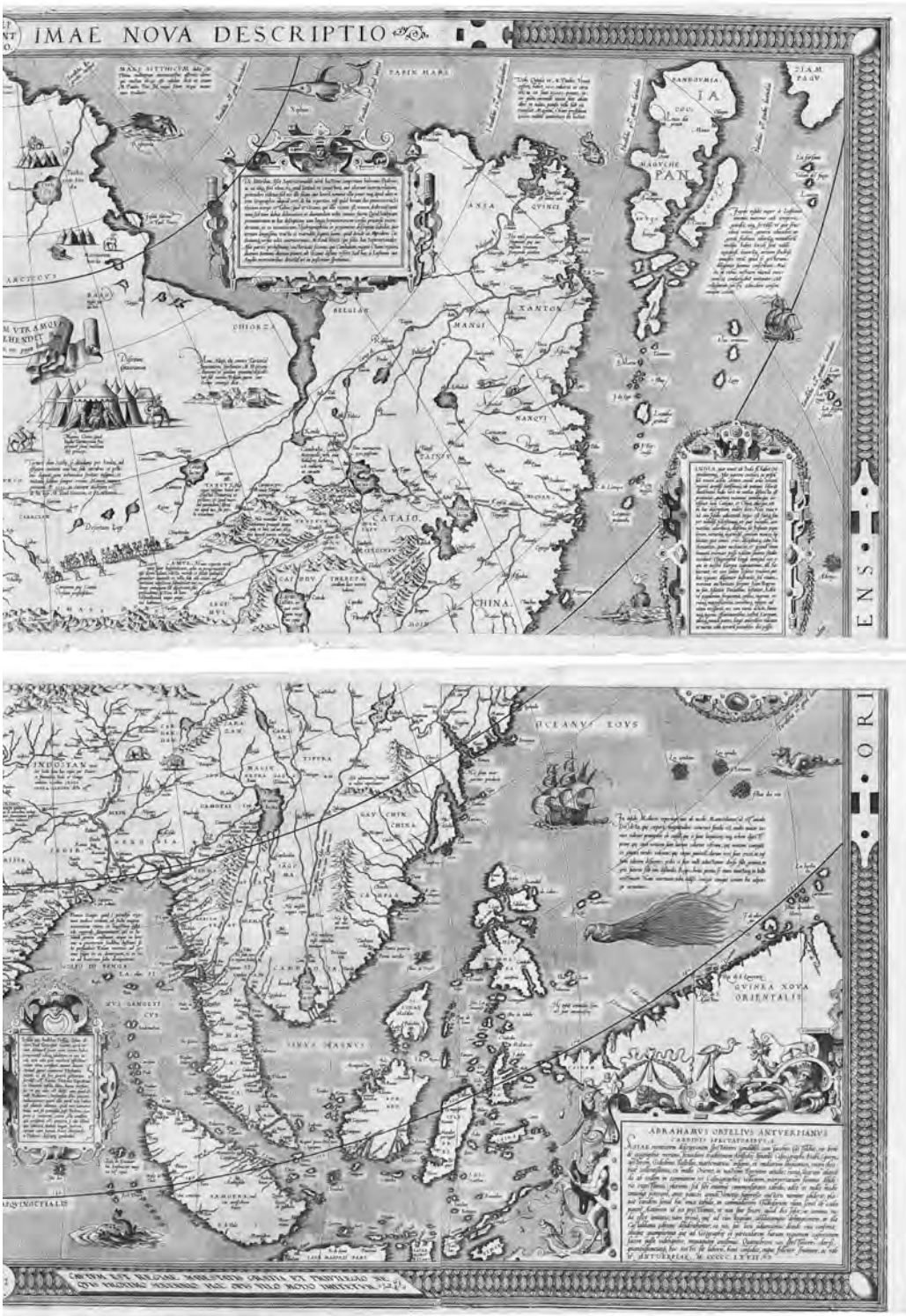


Figure 3.1. Abraham Ortelius, *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio* (Antwerp: [n. pub.], 1567), Universitätsbibliothek Basel, UBH Kartenslg AA 98–99.



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Source: <https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-12900>.

> Of course, I have accepted the map of Asia you edited as the most pleasing gift, my dearest, savant, and industrious Ortelius. The chart looks as I have wished for such a long time. For this reason, at some time or other, I intend to bring forth into the light a universal chart of our all northern *oikumene*, either through our own or someone else's effort.[3]

To a considerable extent, the leitmotiv of the letter is the difficulty of the work Ortelius undertook, although Postel corrects some mistakes that the Brabantian mapmaker made. More broadly, Postel wishes for further developments in the field of cartography in order to solve two major issues: the calculation of the corresponding length of one degree of longitude and one degree of latitude.[4] The letter is also an occasion for Postel to remind Ortelius of the relevance of a fourteenth-century Arabic work of geography to endorse Ortelius's cartographical achievements and Postel's cosmography — here understood as the discipline 'that, thumbing its nose at etymology, does not deal only with the earth, but with all the visible universe'.[5] Here, Postel is referring to the *Taqwīm al-buldān* (*The Arrangement of Countries*, 731/1321), a Ptolemaic mathematical geography composed by the historian, geographer, and governor of Hama Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī Abū al-Fidāʾ (672/1273–732/1331), best known in Latin Christendom as Abulfeda or Abilfeda.[6] Postel was the first to bring a copy of this Arabic text to Europe and — we learn from the letter he sent to Ortelius — was obliged to pledge it, alongside other manuscripts, to the future Palatine elector Otto Heinrich von der Pfalz in 1555, as we shall see:

> If someday I am allowed to reclaim [my books] from the library of the duke of Bavaria, Otto Heinrich, to whom I was obliged to pawn my Abilfedea with fourteen other books for 200 ducats, you will be able to fully validate the proof of my labours, your efforts, and our meticulous work through it [i.e., Abilfedea].[7]

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3 'Gratissimum plane munus Orteli charissime doctissimeque et diligentissime accepi a te editam tabulam Asiae, ea plane forma qua pridem ut aveo sic meditor totius nostrae Aquilonaris partis οἰκουμένην universalemque chartam quandoque aut nostra aut aliena sollicitudine in lucem protrahere'. Hessels, ed., *Abrahami Ortelii epistulae*, no. 19: *Guilielmus Postellus, to Abrahamus Ortelius*, p. 42. Perhaps curiously, Postel uses here the word *oikumene* (inhabited world). For differences between maps of the known world and maps of the entire earth, see Snyder, 'Map Projections in the Renaissance', pp. 365–81.

4 See in particular Hessels, ed., *Abrahami Ortelii epistulae*, no. 19: *Guilielmus Postellus, to Abrahmus Ortelius*, p. 45.

5 Brague, *The Wisdom of the World*, p. 3.

6 In this paper, I use the words cosmography and geography in accord with the definitions, infused with ambivalences, used by the authors discussed here. For an overview, see, for example, Milanesi, 'Geography and Cosmography in Italy', pp. 443–68 and Tessicini, 'Definitions of Cosmography and Geography', pp. 31–50.

7 'Si quando ex bibliotheca illa ducis Bavariae D. Otthonis Henrici, ubi ducentis aureis numis Abilfedeam nostrum cum 14 aliis voluminibus oppignerare sum coactus, licebit recuperare, erit unde et meorum laborum et tuae diligentiae assertionisque nostrae sedulitatis

This small note is significant for several reasons, the most important for our purpose here being the role Postel envisions for his copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* in incorporating a transformative discourse into both cosmography and its graphic representation, cartography. Postel's claim might help us shed some light on the exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* he owned and address how sixteenth-century cosmographers and cartographers intended to use Abū al-Fidāʾ's work. The following section will explore Ortelius's map *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio* and the criticism he advanced in his chart of Asia of Italian cartographer Giacomo Gastaldi (*c.* 1500–1566) as a lens for understanding the influence of Postel's scholarly endeavours and his copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān*. In the third and fourth sections, I will look at the impact of the codex Postel purchased on sixteenth-century European geographers, cosmographers, and cartographers as well as on seventeenth-century Arabists — who replaced the former group in the study of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* — enquiring into their reading practices and reviewing and integrating literature in the field. The case of Postel's exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* and its descendants offers us the opportunity to address two main topics of *Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean*: connectivity across time and space — in particular between South and North Europe — and the dialectical relationship that written artefacts have with the context in which they are situated and used.

Meanwhile, the analysis of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples of usage of either the exemplar of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* that Postel once owned or other manuscripts that were later copied from Postel's codex will enable us to reflect on the legacy of Postel's *marginalia*. Arguably, Postel's interventions helped shape his copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* into a scholarly object endowed with a specific identity that partly guided the subsequent reception of both this particular copy and the *Taqwīm al-buldān* in general. Of particular interest are the annotations that Postel himself wrote while studying his copy. In this essay, I will focus on some geographical toponyms he transcribed or translated from Arabic. Indeed, Postel's annotations that accompany the *Taqwīm al-buldān* tell us about early modern knowledge transfers in much the same way as do later copies that directly or indirectly stem from Postel's exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān*. This makes Postel's annotations as relevant as the original text to understanding the burgeoning of early modern geography, cosmography, and cartography as well as the nascent early modern European Orientalism.

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testimonium possis abunde confirmare'. Hessels, ed., *Abrahami Ortelii epistulae*, no. 19: *Guilielmus Postellus, to Abrahamus Ortelius*, pp. 42–43.

A Thorny Issue: Abraham Ortelius, Giacomo Gastaldi, and Abū al-Fidā'

Scholarship has usually depicted Ortelius as a collector and an editor of maps rather than a mapmaker.[8] Nevertheless, he had been known as a cartographer since at least 1563, as a letter from Hungarian humanist Johannes Sambucus (1531–1584) dated 22 September 1563 testifies.[9] Born in Antwerp in 1527, Ortelius took over the family business, trading books and prints. He started purchasing maps from various printing houses in the Netherlands and during his voyages, especially in Italy, in the 1550s.[10] In 1564, he published his first map, an eight-sheet mappemonde entitled *Typus orbis terrarum* (*Image of the World*), later included in his famous world atlas, the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (*Theatre of the World*), published by Gilles Coppens de Diest in Antwerp in 1570. The 1567 eight-sheet map of Asia — later re-edited in his *Theatrum* — was the third map Ortelius published.

It is worth noting that in the title block placed in the lower right corner of Ortelius's *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio*, the cartographer suggests that the role that Abū al-Fidā''s *Taqwīm al-buldān* and Guillaume Postel played in sixteenth-century European cartography might have been greater than was generally thought. Significantly, any reference to Abū al-Fidā' disappeared in the *Asiae nova descriptio* (*New Description of Asia*) — the re-edited version of the *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio* — in the *Theatrum*.[11] Equally significantly, in the 1567 map of Asia, Ortelius accuses Italian mapmaker Giacomo Gastaldi of not declaring the use he made of Abū al-Fidā''s treatise to draw up his maps of Asia. Meanwhile, Ortelius acknowledges Postel's merits in having been the first to bring an exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* to Europe and, more broadly, in establishing a connection between European scholars and the Arabic intellectual tradition. Finally, he completes the scholarly portrait of Postel by expressing hope for a future translation of the Arabic text by the French scholar:

> Honest readers, when Giacomo Gastaldi [...] published, in Venice a few years ago, the most recent description of Asia [printing] numerous maps, though little proportionate to each other — so that you could not combine them in any way — he followed the [cosmographical] tradition of Abilfedea Ishmael, the Arabic cosmographer, whose name he deleted [from his maps]. Guillaume Postel, eminent in mathematics and well

8 See, for instance, Koeman, *The History of Abraham Ortelius*, p. 14, Mangani, *Il 'mondo' di Abramo Ortelio*, pp. 147–83, and Van den Broecke, 'Abraham Ortelius's Library Reconstructed', pp. 25–50.

9 For the letter, see Hessels, ed., *Abrahami Ortelii epistolae*, no. 13; *Johannes Sambucus, to Abrahamus Ortelius*, pp. 28–30 and Koeman, *The History of Abraham Ortelius*, p. 12.

10 See Van den Broecke, *Ortelius Atlas Maps*, p. 13 and Koeman, *The History of Abraham Ortelius*, pp. 13, 17.

11 See Van den Broecke, *Ortelius Atlas Maps*, no. 6.

> versed in various languages, among which Arabic, brought this author [Abilfedea] to our Europe from the Middle East. We are waiting [Postel] to interpret this author entirely one day since [Abilfedea] is helpful to everyone in the cosmographical discipline. [So far] It seems [to me] right to represent Asia, once and for all, in one single map. The chart [will be] of the greatest utility for scholars.[12]

We know that the intended target of Ortelius's polemical claim consisted of three maps of Asia that Gastaldi published in Venice between 1559 and 1561: *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia* (*Illustration of the First Part of Asia*, 1559) (Fig. 3.2), *Il disegno della seconda parte dell'Asia* (*Illustration of the Second Part of Asia*, 1561), and *Il disegno della terza parte dell'Asia* (*Illustration of the Third Part of Asia*, 1561).[13]

Gastaldi, active in Venice between 1539 and 1566, was probably one of the most important cartographers in sixteenth-century Europe. His charts of Asia and Africa were re-edited and re-published across Europe and 'shaped Western European geographic views of the Middle East far into the eighteenth century in respect to two points — the usage of oriental or orientalizing toponymy and the study of oriental sources'.[14] Despite Ortelius's criticism of Gastaldi and his claim to novelty, the former's *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio* does not add anything relevant compared to Gastaldi's maps of Asia, barring the future Bering Strait — unnamed in Ortelius's map — that he had placed in the north-east of the map.[15] However, in his later *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, in the *Catalogus auctorum* (*List of Authors*), Ortelius describes Gastaldi as the main source of his new chart of Asia, the *Asiae nova descriptio*, among other charts, and — more significantly — no longer mentions Abū al-Fidāʾ.[16]

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12 'Asiae recentiorem descriptionem, spectatores candidissimi, cum Jacobus Castaldus, [...] secundum traditionem Abilfedeae Ismaelis cosmographi Arabi (quem auctorem, Gulielmus Postellus, mathematicus insignis et multarum linguarum, etiam Arabicae, callentissimus, ex medio Oriente in nostram Europam attulit; eumque integrum aliquando ab eodem in communem rei cosmographicae utilitatem, interpretatum summo desiderio expectamus) plurimis, sed sibi minime commensuratis tabulis, adeo ut nullo modo coniungi poterant, ante paucos annos, Venetiis, suppresso auctoris nomine, aediderit; placuit eadem simul hac unica tabula, in commodiorem studiosorum usum, semel ab oculos ponere'. Ortelius, *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio*.

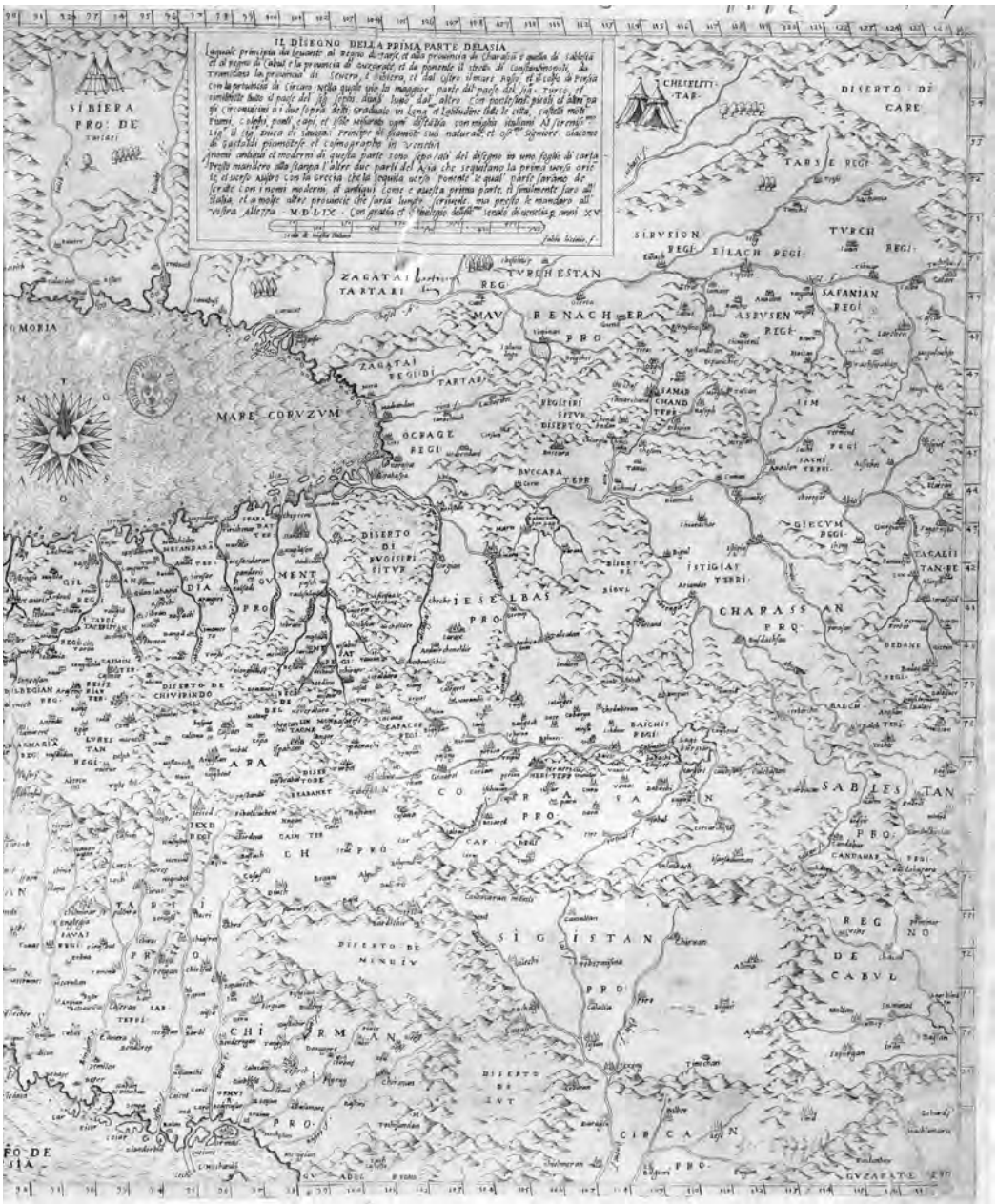
13 See Almagià, *Monumenta cartographica vaticana*, II, pp. 35–37 and 63–66.

14 Brentjes, 'Giacomo Gastaldi's Maps of Anatolia', p. 123.

15 See Ortelius, *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio*. However, Ortelius's map of Asia was not the first map to depict the Americas as a separate continent. The first cartographer to name the strait as Anian Strait and give a precise representation of it was Giacomo Gastaldi, who described the strait in his short book *La universale descrittione del mondo*, printed by Matteo Pagano in Venice in 1561. For the history of the Anian Strait before and after Gastaldi, see Horodowich, *The Venetian Discovery of America*, pp. 126–33.

16 Gastaldi's 1561 maps of Asia were the main cartographical sources of Ortelius's maps of Asia in the 1570 edition of the *Theatrum*, including his *Asiae nova descriptio*, his chart of *Tartaria*, and two maps of the Ottoman Empire. The maps of Anatolia and Persia in the *Theatrum* are mainly based on Gastaldi's 1564 chart of *Asia Minor*. See Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarum*,

Figure 3.2. Giacomo Gastaldi, *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia* (Venice: Fabio Licinio, 1559), *recto* leaf, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Cartes et plans, GE C-5777 (1–3). Reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.


IL DISEGNO DELLA PRIMA PARTE DELASIA
SIBIEPA PRO: DE
CHEIELETI TAR.
DISERTO DE CARE
TABS E REGI
TVRCH REGI
SERVSION REGI
EILACH REGI
ZAGATAI TARTARI REG
TVRCHESTAN
SAFANIAN REGI
ASBVSEN REGI
MAV RENACHER PRO
ZAGATAI REGIDI TARTARI
MARE CORVZVM
OCRAGE REGI
BVCCARA
TEBE
DISERTO DI BVGISIRI SITVE
GIECVM REGI
TACALII TAN-BE
IESELBAS PRO
CHAPASSAN PRO
SABLES TAN
PRO
SIGISTAN
REG NO DE CABVL
PRO
CIRCAN
PRO
GVZARATE

Scholarship has widely debated Gastaldi's sources for his maps of Asia and questioned Ortelius's statements in his 1567 chart. As scholarship has often argued, almost all the toponyms of China and Central Asia in *Dei viaggi di Messer Marco Polo* (*Travels of Sir Marco Polo*), edited by the well-known Italian geographer Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485–1557) and included in the second volume of his *Navigationi et viaggi* (*Navigations and Travels*), published posthumously in 1559, can also be found in Gastaldi's maps or in the lists of ancient and modern geographical names that Gastaldi added on the *verso* leaf of both *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia* (Fig. 3.3) and *Il disegno della seconda parte dell'Asia*, and in the title block in the right corner on the *recto* of *Il disegno della terza parte dell'Asia*.[17] Nevertheless, Ramusio's edition of Marco Polo's *Viaggi* cannot adequately explain a vast number of Gastaldi's Persian, Arabic, and Turkish geographical names.[18]

An attempt to address the issue of Gastaldi's sources was made, based on Ortelius's reference to Abū al-Fidā"s *Taqwīm al-buldān* in his chart of Asia.[19] Close textual analysis shows that Ramusio himself copied coordinates and place names from Abū al-Fidā"s *Taqwīm al-buldān*. Prefacing his edition of Marco Polo's travelogue, Ramusio reveals much about his Arabic source and, to acquaint readers with the Asian localities described by Polo, provides a list of twenty toponyms and their corresponding coordinates that were undoubtedly taken from the *Taqwīm al-buldān*:

> The longitudes and latitudes described below have been taken from the book of Sir Abilfada Ishmael. A copy of it has ended up in my hand. It is very precious to me. [The coordinates] will be used for some lands and places named in this volume. For this reason, I have published them here, [hoping that] the benevolent reader could enjoy, to some extent, the beauty [of the book] of Sir Ishmael, which has been recently brought to light by God's will.[20]

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fol. Avi[r]. For further details, Almagià, *Monumenta cartographica vaticana*, II, pp. 34–37 and 63–66, Van den Broecke, *Ortelius Atlas Maps*, pp. 47, 214, 218–20, 225, Karrow, *Mapmakers of the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 2–3, 4, 8, 85, 91–92, 243–45, 388–93, Koeman, *The History of Abraham Ortelius*, pp. 56, 63, Meurer, *Fontes cartographici Orteliani*, pp. 37–38, 87–88, 151, 213. Ortelius' s *Asiae nova descriptio* can be found in Van den Broecke, *Ortelius Atlas Maps*, no. 6.

17 See Nordenskjöld, 'The Influence of the "Travels of Marco Polo"', pp. 396–406, Almagià, *Monumenta cartographica vaticana*, pp. 65–66, and Sezgin, *Mathematical Geography*, II, pp. 105–15.

18 See, for example, Almagià, *Monumenta cartographica vaticana*, II, pp. 63–66, and Brentjes, 'Giacomo Gastaldi's Maps of Anatolia', pp. 123–41.

19 See, for example, the analysis of Almagià, *Monumenta cartographica vaticana*, II, pp. 63–66.

20 'Queste longitudini e latitudini che qui sotto descriveremo sono state cavate dal libro del signore Abilfada Ismael, una copia del quale io mi ritrovo nelle mani, e tengo molto cara; e serviranno ad alcune terre e luoghi nominati nel presente volume, a questo fine pubblicate da noi, acciò che 'l benigno lettore gusti in qualche parte della beltà del libro del predetto signore Ismael, venuto divinamente in luce a' nostri tempi'. See Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 72.

Figure 3.3. Giacomo Gastaldi, *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia* (Venice: Fabio Licinio, 1559), *verso* leaf, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Cartes et plans, GE C-5777 (1–3). Reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

We know that Gastaldi and Ramusio established a successful partnership and a long-lasting friendship. Ramusio was the secretary of the Venetian Consiglio dei Dieci, which commissioned several wall maps from Gastaldi for the Sala dello Scudo at Palazzo Ducale,[21] and the latter drew maps for Ramusio's third volume of his *Navigationi et viaggi* (1556). Indeed, both Gastaldi and Ramusio were part of a network that stretched well beyond mere scientific interests in cartography and geography: they were members of the Accademia Veneziana or Accademia della Fama,[22] which put in place an ambitious publication plan of geographical accounts and reports — echoing the Venetian political agenda and its imperialist ideology.[23]

Scholars have thus suggested that Gastaldi used the exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* that his friend Ramusio owned. More precisely, modern scholarship has argued that Postel created a Latin or Italian translation of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* and that both Ramusio and Gastaldi had access to Postel's translation and used it to name or situate places otherwise unknown to European cartographers and geographers of the time.[24] Nevertheless, Abū al-Fidāʾ's geography lacks Turkish and Persian names, while these are present in Gastaldi's 1559–1561 charts of Asia. This means that the *Taqwīm al-buldān* in itself cannot stand 'as a comprehensive source for Gastaldi's cartographic work'.[25] As scholarship has demonstrated, he also did not use Abū al-Fidāʾ's coordinates, employing other sources, such as modern portolans.[26]

Moreover, although considerable scholarship has argued the opposite, Postel never (fully) translated the *Taqwīm al-buldān*. In the preface to Marco Polo's account addressed to Girolamo Fracastoro (*c.* 1476–1553), Ramusio claims that he was lucky enough to get 'a part of an Arabic book that a man of our times, who knows many languages, has recently translated into Latin. This book was written more than two hundred years ago by a prince of Syria, Abilfada Ishmael'.[27] Ramusio somehow accessed a partial translation of the Arabic treatise: he quotes a perfectly translated section from Abū al-Fidāʾ's

21 See Gallo 'Le mappe geografiche del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia', pp. 47–113.

22 See Cosgrove, 'Mapping New Worlds', p. 81. Woodward argues that Ramusio's son, Paolo, was a member of the Accademia Veneziana; see Woodward, *Maps as Prints in the Italian Renaissance*, p. 18.

23 For an overview of the Accademia Veneziana, see Testa, *Italian Academies*, pp. 96–122. For an overview of the role of cartography and geography in the Venetian political context, see Horodowich, *The Venetian Discovery of America*, pp. 93–98.

24 See, for example, Almagià, *Monumenta cartographica vaticana*, II, pp. 63–66.

25 Brentjes, 'Giacomo Gastaldi's Maps of Anatolia', p. 129.

26 For Gastaldi's and Abū al-Fidāʾ's coordinates, see, for instance, Sezgin, *Mathematical Geography*, II, pp. 98–115. For Gastaldi's use of modern Ottoman sources, see Brentjes, 'Giacomo Gastaldi's Maps of Anatolia', pp. 123–41.

27 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 24. The original reads as follows: 'una parte d'un libro arabo, ultimamente tradotta in latino per un uomo di questa età ben intendente di molte lingue, composto già dugento e più anni d'un gran principe di Soria detto Abilfada Ismael […]'.

description of the Caspian Sea in a brief explanation of Polo's toponyms preceding his *Viaggi*[28] but complains that 'this book on geography has not been fully translated, and most of the descriptions of each province are missing'.[29] Postel's *De orbis terrae concordia* (*On the World Concord*, 1544) and the undated manuscript Lat. 3402 at the Bibliothèque nationale de France display attempts he made to translate Arabic, in particular the Qurʾān.[30] Likewise, the Arabic manuscripts he owned, including his exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān*, also show that Postel made efforts to gain knowledge of Arabic.[31] Nevertheless, his translations have cast doubts on his Arabic proficiency,[32] making it difficult to ascertain the extent to which Postel would have been able to translate such a complex geographical treatise without comparing his version to previous translations, as he probably did for the Qurʾān. Among other things, a (complete) translation of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* was not yet available in 1567, as we have read in Ortelius's *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio*.

Yet, Postel's copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* undoubtedly circulated among Venetian geographers and cartographers in the 1550s, when Ramusio carried out the editorial project of the *Navigationi e viaggi* (*c.* 1550–1556) and Gastaldi published some of his charts of Asia, as we shall see in the next section. Thus, it is worth studying the circulation of Postel's copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* to assess how a medieval Arabic geographical treatise was perceived and interpreted in sixteenth-century Europe and to estimate Postel's role — usually explained in general terms — in contributing to the dissemination of this Arabic geography.

Circulation and Use of Guillaume Postel's Copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* in Italy

At about the same time as Ramusio and Gastaldi were working in Venice, Guillaume Postel was active as a cosmographer, publishing his *De universitate* (*On the Universe*) in 1552 and his *Cosmographicae disciplinae compendium* (*Compendium of Cosmography*) in 1561.[33] The French scholar produced a

28 See Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, pp. 58–59.

29 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 25. The original reads as follows: 'questo libro di geografia non è tradotto tutto, ma vi manca la maggior parte delle commentazioni sopra ciascuna provincia [...]'.

30 For this issue, see De la Cruz Palma and Planas, 'Sobre el Corán latino de Guillaume Postel', 515–39.

31 See Saliba, 'Arabic Science in Sixteenth-Century Europe', pp. 115–64, Picherot, 'Postel arabisant?', pp. 75–90, and Comacchi, 'Antiquarianism or *Taḥqīq*?', pp. 338–52.

32 For an overview, see Hamilton, 'The Qur'an as Chrestomathy', p. 214 n. 5. For early criticism of Postel's knowledge of Arabic, see, for example, the letters from Joseph Justus Scaliger to Isaac Casaubon and to Johannes Buxtorf in Botley and van Miert, eds, *The Correspondence of Joseph Justus Scaliger*, IV, p. 184, and VI, p. 591.

33 Some references to both books can be read in Lestringant 'Cosmographie pour une restitution', pp. 227–46.

significant number of cosmographical treatises and chorographical works, such as his *Descriptio Alcahirae urbis* (*Description of Cairo*, 1549). Moreover, he authored various types of charts, including the *Description et charte de la Terre saincte* (*Description and Chart of the Holy Land*, 1553) and the *Polo aptata nova charta universi* (*New Chart of the Universe Adapted to the North Pole*, 1578).[34]

As Ortelius states in his 1567 map of Asia, the *Asiae orbis partium maximae nova descriptio*, Postel brought the first copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* to Europe from the Middle East. Postel's exemplar is now in the manuscript Vaticano Arabo 266 at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome.[35] During his second journey across the Ottoman Empire between 1549 and 1551, he purchased the manuscript, presumably in Damascus, thanks to the financial support of the fourth French ambassador to the Ottoman court, Gabriel de Luetz, whose entourage Postel joined in Jerusalem in November 1549.[36] Soon after his excursion across the Ottoman lands, Postel headed towards Venice between 1551 and 1552. He returned there in 1554, when he abandoned the project of the Syriac New Testament in Vienna, to defend some books he had previously published before the tribunal of the Venetian Inquisition, as they were suspected of containing heresy.[37]

As has already been mentioned, Postel extensively annotated his *Taqwīm al-buldān*. The *marginalia* that the manuscript Vat. Ar. 266 contains reflect Postel's main interests in toponyms and their coordinates, and in particular his concern with the calculation of longitude.[38] The *Taqwīm al-buldān* is structured in two parts: a descriptive-mathematical geography and a series of tables (*taqwīm*) with no maps. In the tables, Abū al-Fidāʾ writes the name he attributes to each locality listed on the *verso* pages, in addition to his sources, the locality's longitude, its latitude, its astronomical climate, its common name, and the vocalization for the toponym he had first provided.[39] In the margins of the manuscript, next to the tables, Postel annotated more than thirty Latin translations or transliterations of Arabic toponyms, mostly located on the shores of the Mediterranean, in the Arabian peninsula, and in Central Asia. As the letter to Ortelius has shown, Postel annotated the Arabic treatise in the hope of achieving a more detailed and more precise knowledge of the northern hemisphere for his cosmographical works and maps — although his interest was not merely scientific but presumptively, political.

Despite spelling and orthographic errors, it seems that Postel attempted to revise classical and Ptolemaic toponyms according to their corresponding

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34 See Destombes, 'Guillaume Postel cartographe', pp. 361–71 and Milanesi, 'Guillaume Postel cosmografo', pp. 45–54.

35 See BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fols 1^{r}–125^{v}.

36 For further details, see the letter Postel sent to his friend Andreas Masius on the 24 February 1555: De Chaufepié, *Nouveau dictionnaire*, III, pp. 228–29.

37 For the trial, see Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, pp. 115–29.

38 See Comacchi, 'Antiquarian or *Taḥqīq*?', pp. 338–52.

39 See BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fols 1^{r}–125^{v}.

Arabic names. We might assume that he used some cartographical or geographical texts to decipher the Arabic toponyms, especially those located in Asia. Postel might have used the modern maps of Anatolia and Persia — the *Natolia, nova tabula* (*Anatolia: A New Chart*) and *Persia, nova tabula* (*Persia: A New Chart*) — that Gastaldi engraved for Pietro Andrea Mattioli's Italian vernacular edition of Ptolemy's *Geography*, printed by Giovanni Battista Pedrezzano in Venice in 1548.[40] As Sonja Brentjes has demonstrated, Gastaldi's 1548 charts offer a good repository of Westernized ancient and medieval Asian toponyms as well as a few modern Turkish names.[41] At the same time, we can speculate that Gastaldi incorporated some of the toponyms that we can read in Postel's exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* in his revised and enriched maps of Asia printed between 1559 and 1561 — such as *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia* — combining Postel's copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* with other more up-to-date sources. This not only confirms that the *Taqwīm al-buldān* cannot explain the abundance of modern names in Gastaldi's charts of Asia, but also helps us understand the perception that the Italian cartographer had of this Arabic treatise: a — probably — limited and outdated source of geographical information. Likewise, in his preface to Polo's *Viaggi*, Ramusio seems to explicitly introduce the *Taqwīm al-buldān* as a historical source useful for reading Polo's travelogue, obtaining 'a peculiar geography of those regions of Asia and Africa known at the author's times',[42] and also useful for acquiring 'a better knowledge of the ancient names of those cities quoted in the histories of Alexander the Great and Strabo'.[43]

What follows here is a comparison between some *marginalia* in Postel's manuscript, Ramusio's *Dei viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, Gastaldi's 1548 charts of Anatolia and Persia, and Gastaldi's *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia*. When looking at how place names correspond to one another, it should be remembered that some translations of Anatolian and Persian toponyms in Postel's copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* are annotated by a later sixteenth-century hand and that Ramusio used inconsistent spelling patterns in naming the same geographical places while editing the travel reports for the second volume of his *Navigationi et viaggi*, including Marco Polo's travelogue.[44]

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40 See Gastaldi, *Natolia, nova tabula* and Gastaldi, *Persia, nova tabula*. The edition is an Italian translation of Sebastian Münster's Latin version of Ptolemy's *Geography* (1540).

41 See Brentjes, 'Giacomo Gastaldi's Maps of Anatolia', pp. 123–41.

42 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 25. The original reads as follows: 'una geografia particolar delle parti di Asia e Africa delle quali s'avea notizia a' suoi tempi [...]'.

43 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 25. The original reads as follows: 'piú certa cognizione di molti nomi antichi, citati nell'istorie di Alessandro e Strabone […]'. The 'histories of Alexander the Great' are presumptively Quintus Curtius Rufus's *Historiae Alexandri Magni* printed in Venice around 1471 by Wendelin von Speyer.

44 For the orthographic variations encountered in Ramusio's *Viaggi* and listed in the footnotes below, see the *Lemmario* in Ramusio, *Dei Viaggi di Messer Marco Polo […] Edizione critica digitale*.

Table 3.1. Comparison between toponyms occurring in Gastaldi's *Natolia, nova tabula*, Gastaldi's *Persia, nova tabula*, Postel's manuscript, Ramusio's *Dei viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, Gastaldi's *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia*, and modern English names.

Gastaldi's *Natolia, nova tabula* and *Persia, nova tabula* (1548)	**Postel's copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* (BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266)**	**Ramusio's *Dei viaggi di Messer Marco Polo* (1559)**	**Gastaldi's *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia* (1561)[45]**	**Modern English names**
—	Merdin[46]	Merdin,[47] Meridin[48]	Merdin	Mardin (Turkey)
—	Cozrin[49]	—	—	Karzin (Iran)
—	Seruestan[50]	—	Serustan	Sarvestan (Iran)
Hormus[51]	[ormuz][52]	Ormus[53]	Ormus (ancient name: Armusa)	Ormus (Iran)
Setelia[54]	Attalia[55]	—	Settelia (ancient name: Attalia)	Antalya (Turkey)

Table continued opposite

45 For the names encountered in Gastaldi's map and listed in Table 3.1, see *Il disegno della prima parte dell'Asia, recto* leaf. The ancient toponyms are listed on the *verso* leaf. *Malatia* is on the *verso* leaf only.

46 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 70^{v}. In Fra Mauro's world map, we can find the variant *Merdi*.

47 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 72. The name appears in the list of places that Ramusio claims he took from the Arabic treatise. The list prefaces Polo's travelogue.

48 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, pp. 92, 95. The toponym occurs in Polo's travelogue. Variants of *Meridin* can be found in Ramusio's edition of Hayton of Corycus's *Storia dei Tartari* and *Viaggio di Iosafa Barbaro alla Tana e nella Persia* in the second volume of *Navigationi et viaggi*. In the manuscript tradition of Polo's travel account, the same locality is also called *Meridiem* and *Masa Meredimi*.

49 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 81^{v}.

50 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 82^{v}.

51 The name can actually be read in Gastaldi, *Arabia felix, nova tabula*. The map is included in Mattioli's edition of Ptolemy's *Geography*. In Fra Mauro's world map, we can find the name *Isola Hormus*.

52 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 83^{v}. The annotation is not by Postel. A later sixteenth-century hand added it.

53 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, pp. 28, 102, 106, 107, 109, 269, 278, 293, 294. The toponym occurs in both Ramusio's preface and Polo's travelogue. In the manuscript tradition of Polo's account, the same place presents numerous orthographic variations, such as *Cremosor*, *Cormose*, *Formosa*, *Churmos*. In Ramusio's edition of *Viaggio di un mercante che fu nella Persia* in the second volume of *Navigationi et viaggi*, the same locality is called *Orimes*.

54 Gastaldi, *Natolia, nova tabula*.

55 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 91^{v}.

Gastaldi's *Natolia, nova tabula* and *Persia, nova tabula* (1548)	**Postel's copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* (BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266)**	**Ramusio's *Dei viaggi di Messer Marco Polo* (1559)**	**Gastaldi's *Il disegno della prima parte del Asia* (1561)**	**Modern English names**
Capadocia[56]	Amasia[57]	—	Amasia (ancient name: Amasia)	Amasya (Turkey)
Melitene[58]	Malta Melitene[59]	—	Malatia (ancient name: Melitene)	Malatya (Turkey)
Arsingan[60]	[Arazingan][61]	Arcingan[62]	Arzingan (ancient name: Aziris)	Erzincan (Turkey)
Terbezonda,[63] Trebesonda[64]	Trapezun[65]	Trabesonda[66]	Trebesonda (ancient name: Trapezus)	Trabzon (Turkey)
—	[Arzen][67]	Argiron[68]	Arazen	Arzen (Turkey)
—	[malagirt][69]	—	Malagirt	Malazgirt (Turkey)
Derbent[70]	[Derbent][71]	—	Derbent	Derbent (Russia)

56 Gastaldi, *Natolia, nova tabula*.
57 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 92^{v}. This name might have been annotated by the same hand that added *ormuz*. *Amasia* also occurs in Fra Mauro's world map.
58 Gastaldi calls the city *Melitene* in his *Tabula Asiae I* — representing the ancient Cappadocia — in Mattioli's edition of Ptolemy's *Geography*.
59 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 92^{v}.
60 Gastaldi, *Persia, nova tabula*. The toponym *Arzengan* occurs in Fra Mauro's world map.
61 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 93^{v}. This toponym is by the same hand that annotated *ormuz*.
62 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 91. The toponym occurs in Polo's travelogue. In the manuscript tradition of Polo's travels, we can read similar orthographic variations, such as *Arçinga* and *Arcinga*.
63 Gastaldi, *Natolia, nova tabula*. Gastaldi calls the same city *Trapez* in his *Tabula Asiae I* in Mattioli's edition of Ptolemy's *Geography*. The toponym *Trabexonda* can be found in Fra Mauro's world map.
64 Gastaldi, *Persia, nova tabula*.
65 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 93^{v}.
66 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 89. The toponym occurs in Polo's travelogue.
67 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 93^{v}. A final *g* in *Arzen* has been crossed out. This toponym is in the same hand as *ormuz* and *Arazingan*. The variant *Arzeron* can be found in Fra Mauro's world map.
68 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 91. The toponym occurs in Polo's travelogue. However, the name might refer to today's Erzurum in Turkey.
69 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 94^{v}. This toponym is by the same hand that added *ormuz*, *Arazingan*, and *Arzen*.
70 Gastaldi, *Persia, nova tabula*.
71 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fol. 97^{v}. This name is in the same hand as *ormuz*, *Arazingan*, *Arzen*, and *malagirt*.

We should also keep in mind that, despite some significant innovations and their claims to novelty, all these authors drew abundantly on ancient and medieval Western sources, such the famous Venetian world map (*c.* 1450) by Fra Mauro (*c.* 1400–1459/1464) — that has, among its sources, Polo's medieval accounts of Asia.[72] One significant result of the analysis is that most of Ramusio's toponyms described in the preface addressed to Fracastoro and those listed before Polo's travelogue, as well as the translation of the Caspian Sea mentioned before, were definitely taken from the *Taqwīm al-buldān* but have no parallels in Postel's *marginalia* or works.[73] On the other hand, Gastaldi might have read what Postel annotated in his copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* in much the same way as Postel himself and the second reader of the *Taqwīm* had read the Arabic manuscript through the eyes of a cartographer using, among the others, Gastaldi's maps. Nevertheless, evidence of Ramusio's acquaintance with Postel's annotations can be traced in the introduction addressed to Fracastoro, where the Italian geographer quotes from longer comments by the French scholar on Abū al-Fidāʾ's determination of the prime meridian.[74] Ramusio argues that Abū al-Fidāʾ 'does not place the first meridian [to pass] through the Fortunate Islands, like Ptolemy, but at ten degrees distance from where Ptolemy placed it, from the coasts of Africa'.[75]

Circulation and Use of Guillaume Postel's Copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* in Northern Europe

As the letter Postel forwarded to Ortelius in 1567 confirms, Postel — unable to secure financial support during the Inquisition trial — pawned his manuscript copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* to the duke of Bavaria and future Palatine elector Otto Heinrich von der Pfalz in 1555. Otto Heinrich purchased fifteen Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Syriac, and Ge'ez manuscripts from Postel for 200 ducats and relocated them in the Bibliotheca Palatina in Heidelberg, as we read in a letter Postel sent to Masius on 24 February 1555[76] and in his preface to the *Cosmographicae disciplinae compendium*.[77] Postel's reference to the *Taqwīm*

72 For Fra Mauro and Ramusio, see, for instance, Davies, 'The Wondrous East', pp. 215–34. For Ramusio's sources and the medieval manuscript tradition of Polo's *Viaggi*, see Andreose and others, 'Le fonti di Ramusio'. For the toponyms occurring in Fra Mauro's map listed in the footnotes below, see Falchetta, *Storia del Mappamondo di Fra' Mauro*, pp. 143–251.

73 The translation of the Caspian Sea is neither among Postel's annotations nor in any of his works. The corresponding Arabic text in Postel's exemplar is BAV, Vat. Ar. 266, fols 16^{v}–17^{r}. For Ramusio's introductory toponyms, which are not in Table 3.1, see Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, pp. 72–73.

74 See BAV, Vat. Ar. 266, fols 9^{v}, 29^{r}.

75 Ramusio, *I viaggi di Messer Marco Polo*, p. 25. The original reads as follows: 'nelle longitudini non comincia dall'isole Fortunate, come fa Tolomeo, ma dalli primi liti delle marine d'Africa, e dice essere differente dieci gradi di quello che fa Tolomeo'.

76 See De Chaufepié, *Nouveau dictionnaire*, III, pp. 228–29.

77 See Postel, *Cosmographicae disciplinae compendium*, a2^{v}.

al-buldān attests to the economic value he attached to the manuscript. His exemplar was certainly a unicum at the time, and Postel did not hesitate to value it more highly than his other Oriental manuscripts. In particular, we learn from Postel's letter to Masius in February 1555 that he had purchased the manuscript 'for sure for 60 ducats in Damascus'[78] and was likely to pawn his copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* to Otto Heinrich 'for 80 ducats'.[79] The duke was a renowned bibliophile: his *Kammerbibliothek* (private library) in Neuburg counted around 390 tomes, and he significantly contributed to the Palatine library with his purchases.[80]

Among the Arabic exemplars of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* that have preserved the text in its entirety, manuscript Vat. Ar. 266 at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome is Postel's exemplar, as noted. This was the copy he pledged to Otto Heinrich, bounded together with that of Ibn Buṭlān (*c.* 458/1066) *Taqwīm al-ṣiḥḥa* (*Tables of Health*).[81] After the sack of the city of Heidelberg by the Catholic League in 1622 during the Thirty Years' War, the new Catholic elector Maximilien of Bavaria seized the library and then donated it to Pope Gregory XV as 'an extraordinary proof of piety',[82] a symbolic act of victory in confessional terms against the Calvinists. The Greek librarian at the Vatican Library, Leone Allacci, was dispatched to Heidelberg to oversee the transport of the volumes to Rome between December 1622 and July 1623. Allacci selected around 2,500 manuscripts — including, of course, Postel's codex of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* — and 5,000 printed books. The transformation of Postel's *Taqwīm al-buldān* into an economic tool, which arose from the difficult circumstances of its owner, set the stage for its subsequent reshaping as a component within a broader collection of tokens of religious devotion. However, both these stages in the social life of the object exerted specific influences on its usages.

When the copy was in Heidelberg and in Rome, various European Arabists became interested in it. Orientalists such as Jakob Christmann (1554–1613), Sebastian Tengnagel (1573–1636), Erpenius (1584–1624), and John Greaves (1602–1652) borrowed, read, and in some cases copied Postel's exemplar.[83] To give an idea of the growing interest in the *Taqwīm al-buldān* and the significance that Postel's manuscript acquired between the end of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century, I will first consider the exemplars that were copied directly from Postel's codex and then its descendants:[84]

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78 See De Chaufepié, *Nouveau dictionnaire*, III, p. 229.

79 See De Chaufepié, *Nouveau dictionnaire*, III, p. 229.

80 See Metzger, '"Ein recht fürstliches Geschäft"', pp. 275–316 and Wagner and Schlechter, 'Von der Neuburger Kammerbibliothek', pp. 137–54.

81 BAV, MS Vat. Ar. 266, fols 127^{r}–68^{v}.

82 Bepler, 'Vicissitudo Temporum', p. 955.

83 For an overview, see Levi della Vida, *Ricerche sulla formazione del più antico fondo*, pp. 327–37 and Jones, *Learning Arabic*, pp. 17–18, 60.

84 What follows aims first at reviewing studies that describe the history of the *Taqwīm*, in particular Giorgio Levi della Vida's catalogues, and updating and merging existent data.

1. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS A.F. 5: this manuscript was extensively annotated by Sebastian Tengnagel, librarian of the Imperial Library in Vienna from 1608 to 1636. It was copied from Postel's exemplar by Ottoman prisoner Ibrāhīm Dervīş for Tengnagel between September and October 1610.[85] German Orientalist Wilhelm Schickard (1592–1635) copied and only in part translated Dervīş's copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān*.[86] As we can read in the colophons, Schickard finished the transcription of Abū al-Fidāʾ's tables in October 1631 and the descriptive part of the text in February 1632, now Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Ar. 2242 and MS Ar. 2241, respectively. Later, German Orientalist Siegmund Gottlob Seebisch (1669–1753) copied Schickard's codex — now Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, MS Mscr. Dresd. Eb. 379.[87]

2. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Dd. 1.2: this codex was copied from Postel's manuscript by Dutch Orientalist Erpenius in 1613. As Giorgio Levi della Vida has suggested, the registers of the Bibliotheca Palatina attest that Erpenius borrowed a manuscript containing the second part of *al-Majmūʿ al-mubārak* (*The Blessed Collection*), the world history by Coptic historian Jirjis ibn al-ʿAmīd known as al-Makīn. This text was another codex Postel had pawned to Otto Heinrich in 1555, and Erpenius never returned it. It is now in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Marsh 309.[88] Presumably, the Dutch Orientalist borrowed Postel's exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* at the same time, aiming to prepare a Latin translation of the Arabic geography, as he confessed in a letter to Isaac Casaubon (1550–1614) in 1614.[89] Erpenius's exemplar was later read by English Orientalists John Greaves — whose hand can be recognized among the annotations in the manuscript — and Samuel Clarke (1624–1669), Edward Pococke's (1604–1691) student.[90]

We know that during his stay in Rome in 1639 John Greaves also read the copy that Postel had formerly owned when the Bibliotheca Palatina was moved

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Second, and more importantly, besides the mobility of written artefacts it intends to bring to the fore the similarities of reading practices between Postel, sixteenth-century Italian geographers, and seventeenth-century northern European Arabists, setting the terms for a future discussion on the origins of modern European Orientalism and the role of Renaissance Italian geographical studies.

85 For this manuscript and Tengnagel's manuscript collection and his collaboration with Ibrāhīm Dervīş, see Çelik and Petrolini, 'Establishing an "Orientalium linguarum Bibliotheca"', pp. 175–231.

86 See Ullmann, 'Arabische, türkische und persische Studien', pp. 121–26.

87 See Ullmann, 'Arabische, türkische und persische Studien', pp. 121–26 and Babinski, 'Ottoman Philology', pp. 242–43 n. 38.

88 See Levi della Vida, *Ricerche sulla formazione del più antico fondo*, p. 334.

89 For the letter, see Jones, 'The Medici Oriental Press (1584–1614)', p. 106 n. 47.

90 For Clarke's attempt to translate the *Taqwīm al-buldān*, see Hall, 'Arabick Learning', p. 151, and a letter from Wallis to Oldenburg in Hall and Boas Hall, eds, *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, pp. 232–37.

to the Vatican Library.[91] Greaves had earlier purchased a sixteenth-century copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* in Istanbul in 1638[92] — now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Greaves 2. He made some use of Postel's exemplar to edit the Arabic text, comparing Postel's copy, the copy Erpenius transcribed, his own copy, and the manuscripts that Pococke purchased in the 1630s — now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Pococke 196 and MS Pococke 379.[93] MS Pococke 379, which bears *marginalia* in Greaves's hand, was later transcribed by William Guise (*c.* 1653–1683) — now Oxford, All Souls College, MS 287. Notably, Greaves never mentions Postel when discussing the scholars who read the *Taqwīm* in the preface to his edition of the text, where he is the first to reconstruct the history of the *Taqwīm*'s fortune, from Ramusio to Schickard.[94]

Indeed, Greaves was the first European scholar to succeed in publishing a Latin translation of Abū al-Fidāʾ's geographical treatise, although an abridged one. His *Chorasmiae, et Mawaralnahrae […] descriptio* (*Description of Khwārezm and Mā warāʾ al-Nahr*, 1650) comprises Abū al-Fidāʾ's general description of the globe and the Asian regions of Khwārezm and Mā warāʾ al-Nahr. John Hudson's *Geographiae veteris scriptores graeci minores* (*Minor Greek Writers in Ancient Geography*), published after Greaves's death, includes the latter's Latin version of Abū al-Fidāʾ's chapter on the Arabic peninsula and the corresponding Arabic text and tables, besides a reprint of Greaves's *Chorasmiae, et Mawaralnahrae*.[95] However, as Gerald J. Toomer suggests, letters to Pococke show the difficulties Greaves faced while working on the edition and translation of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* due to the discrepancies between exemplars and the corruptions of the manuscript he purchased. This led him to question the correctness of Abū al-Fidāʾ's geographical coordinates for drawing maps.[96]

The interest in Abū al-Fidāʾ's treatise surprisingly continued in the second half of the seventeenth century. The French case of Melchisédech Thévenot (*c.* 1620–1692) sheds light on the legacy of Postel's copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* and on the intellectual complexity and broader dialectical movements of early modern Orientalism in seventeenth-century Europe in general.[97] In 1671, Thévenot wrote to the secretary of the Royal Society in London, Henry

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91 See Levi della Vida, *Ricerche sulla formazione del più antico fondo*, pp. 334–35 and Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning*, p. 173.

92 See Greaves, *Chorasmiae, et Mawaralnahrae […] descriptio*, p. Aa3^{r}.

93 For the manuscripts Greaves used, see Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning*, pp. 28, 172–75. See also Mercier, 'English Orientalists', pp. 173–74 and Levi della Vida, *Ricerche sulla formazione del più antico fondo*, p. 334.

94 See Greaves, *Chorasmiae, et Mawaralnahrae […] descriptio*, p. Aa3$^{r–v}$.

95 See Greaves, *Chorasmiae, et Mawaralnahrae[…] descriptio*, Greaves, *Abulfedae descriptio Chorasmiae*, ch. 8, pp. 1–80, and Greaves, *Abulfedae descriptio Arabiae*, ch. 9, pp. 1–76.

96 For a contextualization of the letters and Greaves' publication, see Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning*, pp. 173–75.

97 For a thorough reconstruction of Thévenot's attempt to publish and translate the *Taqwīm al-buldān*, see Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, pp. 81–130.

Oldenburg (*c.* 1618–1677), looking for manuscripts of the *Taqwīm al-buldān*.[98] Oldenburg asked the mathematician John Wallis (1616–1703) in Oxford for information about copies of the Arabic geography. Wallis reported on the exemplars that Pococke had collected and Clarke had compared and the manuscript that Greaves had purchased:

> Concerning Abulfeda: where Mr Grave's copy is, I cannot tell, nor how much paines hee took about it. But Dr Pocock hath two excellent Copies of it. And Mr Clark had (before his death) taken a great deal of paines in comparing them, & other Geographers with them; in order to an Edition of it.[99]

Thanks to Pococke's help, Wallis was also able to locate in Cambridge the codex copied by Erpenius, which Greaves used for his translation. Besides containing information on the exemplars of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* in England, a second letter from Wallis to Oldenburg confirms Greaves's disappointment in the *Taqwīm al-buldān*:

> Since I sent away my last, I have received from Dr Pocock the inclosed Paper in Arabick & (not Latine, but) English, which therefore (because you desire it for a forraigner I have, in two blank pages, put into Latine. He tells mee that Mr John Graves's Abulfeda, (much inferiour to those copies of his,) Mr Clark had the use of, as allso of that at Cambridge which had been Erpenius's, written (he thinks) by Erpenius own hand. That of Mr John Grave, he supposeth is still in the hands of his brother Dr Thomas (not Edward) Grave […].[100]

At the time, Thévenot was planning to produce a complete translation of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* and publish the original text in Arabic, as testified in a letter Thévenot sent to the statesman Jean-Baptiste Colbert in 1669.[101] Overall, Thévenot's project failed. The difficulties he encountered in borrowing or purchasing copies of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* and the lack of funding to secure the printing plan, including the absence of adequate Arabic types, were the tip of the iceberg of what Nicholas Dew has called the 'fragile state of Oriental learning in Paris in the 1660s'.[102] Nevertheless, as Dew shows, Thévenot obtained access to Schickard's copy of Dervīş's *Taqwīm al-buldān* — based on Postel's exemplar — and to the autograph that Jacob Golius (1596–1667) acquired during his voyages, today's Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden,

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98 See Gallien, 'Orientalist Pococke', pp. 7–8.

99 Beeley and Scriba, eds, *Correspondence of John Wallis*, no. 247: *Wallis to Oldenburg, 23 November/[3 December] 1671*, p. 536.

100 Beeley and Scriba, eds, *Correspondence of John Wallis*, no. 249: *Wallis to Oldenburg, 27 November/[7 December] 1671*, pp. 538–39.

101 Nicholas Dew has published an extract from Thévenot's letter to Colbert: see Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, pp. 118–19.

102 Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, p. 127.

MS Or. 57.[103] It then took some years to publish a short extract — including some geographical tables — from a Latin translation of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* in the first volume of Thévenot's *Relations de divers voyages curieux* (*Reports of Various Curious Travels*, 1663–1696).[104] The translation that Thévenot published was presumably made by Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāqilānī (1605–1664), and was based on an 'exemplar in the Vatican Library',[105] namely Postel's copy of the *Taqwīm al-buldān*.

Because of the advancement of Arabic studies in the seventeenth century, we can assume that authors such as Thévenot, Greaves, or Erpenius probably ignored Postel's *marginalia*. However, the content of Postel's comments, which reveals what drove him to acquire and read the Arabic manuscript, still reverberates in the reading practices of seventeenth-century Orientalists, as it does in the works of sixteenth-century Italian geographers. For instance, in the short *avis* (information) prefacing the extracts translated from the *Taqwīm al-buldān*, Thévenot informs readers about the significance of the Arabic geographical tradition for learning the correct coordinates of Asian localities. He goes on to praise Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* in particular, because the Arabic geographer collected 'the best data he could find in other geographies, and, above all, because he annotated the degrees of longitude and latitude for each place'.[106] The *Taqwīm al-buldān* was understood and used in a similar way by Greaves. As such, the criticism of Abū al-Fidāʾ's geography later expressed by Greaves denotes that the English scholar was initially interested in the *Taqwīm al-buldān* mainly because of the coordinates of lesser known Asian regions, which he then partially used in his *Binae tabulae geographicae* (*Two Geographical Tables*, 1648).[107] He also used the manuscript to situate localities named in the margin of his partial translation of the *Masāʾil ʿAbdallāh ibn Salām* (*Questions of ʿAbdallāh ibn Salām*) — now included in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Locke c. 27. This action is obvious, as Greaves insisted on the inaccuracy of data compared to other modern texts and thus on the uselessness of the Arabic treatise for cartographical purposes.

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103 For difficulty in obtaining Golius's codex, see Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, pp. 113–14.

104 See Thévenot, ed., *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, pp. 18–22 and Dew, 'Reading Travels in the Culture of Curiosity', pp. 53–58. A further excerpt was published by Johann Jakob Reiske (1716–1774) at the end of the eighteenth century: see Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters*, pp. 163–64 and p. 287 n. 161.

105 Thévenot, ed., *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, p. 18. The original reads as follows: 'un exemplaire dans la Bibliothèque Vaticane'. For al-Ḥāqilānī, see Dew, 'Reading Travels in the Culture of Curiosity', pp. 42, 54.

106 Thévenot, ed., *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, p. 18. The original reads as follows: 'ce qu'il a trouvé de meilleur chez les autres geographes, et sourtout, dautant qu'il a marqué les degrez de longitude et de latitude de chaque place'.

107 See Mercier, 'English Orientalists', pp. 163–74.

Conclusion

The question of whether and in which ways the exemplar of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* brought to Europe by Postel circulated and — more importantly — influenced geographical and Arabic studies can be answered. On the one hand, Postel's *Taqwīm al-buldān* enjoyed significant mobility. This arguably enhanced its significance, facilitated by extensive loans and copies, although Postel's biography and the broader context of seventeenth-century European politics also influenced this. On the other hand, since Ramusio openly declared having used the *Taqwīm al-buldān* to learn the names and coordinates of specific places in Asia described by Marco Polo, the knowledge within the *Taqwīm al-buldān* had a practical nature that was preserved over the centuries, even among seventeenth-century Orientalists. This highlights the need at the time for a concrete realization of both modern and historical maps and descriptions of Asia. Finally, the use made of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* echoes the *marginalia* in Postel's codex of the work. As these substantially confirm, the main interest in Abū al-Fidāʾ's geography was its toponyms and coordinates, which the Arabic author had included mainly in the second part of his treatise, as well as the determination of one degree of longitude. In other words, Postel's *marginalia*, combined with his exemplar's mobility, helped shift the function of the *Taqwīm al-buldān* from mathematical geography to cartography. Here I can make two additional final points. First, the way Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* was read from Postel onwards reminds us of the state of geographical studies in Europe and the practical nature of geography and cosmography. These disciplines took advantage of the authority of existing ancient or medieval travel and geographical accounts to describe or graphically visualize the world, although the information that the treatise provided was soon considered historical, antiquarian, or inadequate in the sixteenth century. Scholarship in the field has already acknowledged the importance of recovering textual sources and extending the canon of authors, along with the relevance of geographical and cartographical innovations, in shaping the European understanding of both modern and ancient worlds.[108] Secondly, the interest in Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* and Postel's codex among Arabists illustrates the lasting importance of geography in early modern European Orientalism.[109]

Nevertheless, the case of Postel's exemplar of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* might allow us to move — paradoxically — beyond the narrow perspective of European Orientalism. As stated elsewhere, at least in the sixteenth century, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that Postel's copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* served the Ottoman geographical

108 See, for example, Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*, pp. 50–51 and Woodward, 'Cartography and the Renaissance', pp. 3–24.

109 For this issue, see Tolmacheva, 'The Medieval Arabic Geographers', pp. 141–56.

and political enterprise, at the time of military rivalries between Ottomans and Europeans.[110] The circulation of Postel's exemplar of Abū al-Fidāʾ's *Taqwīm al-buldān* beyond Christian borders thus demands a broadening of the frame of references in which it is traditionally understood and an acknowledgement of the intellectual relations between Islamic and Christian cultures as forms of intellectual cross-pollinations, thereby opening out a field for further investigation.

110 The reference is here to Hajji Ahmed's *Mappamundi*, wood-crafted in Venice in 1558. For evidence on the role played by Postel's exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān*, see, in particular, Mangani, 'Abraham Ortelius and the Hermetic Meaning', pp. 59–83 and Comacchi, 'Antiquarian or *Taḥqīq*?', pp. 338–52.

ABSTRACT The French scholar Guillaume Postel (1510–1581) brought the first manuscript copy of Abū al-Fidāʾ's (672/1273–732/1331) mathematical geography, the *Taqwīm al-buldān*, to Europe. The codex widely circulated among sixteenth-century geographers and cartographers as well as among seventeenth-century Arabists. This article investigates the circulation of Postel's exemplar of the *Taqwīm al-buldān*, looking at reading practices and manuscript exchanges. In particular, the article argues that Postel's annotations are consistent with many later scholars' observations on geographical data, showing that seventeenth-century Arabists shared the same interests in Abū al-Fidāʾ's coordinates and Arabic toponyms as sixteenth-century cosmographers, geographers, and cartographers.

KEYWORDS Abū al-Fidāʾ, Guillaume Postel, Giacomo Gastaldi, Giovanni Battista Ramusio, manuscript circulation, geography, cartography, Orientalism

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CLAUDIA STELLA VALERIA GEREMIA

From Africa to the Canary Islands

The Double Lives of Objects (Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries)

Introduction

Due to their geographical position, since the early modern age the Canary Islands have been considered borderlands marking boundaries between the Old and the New World. Fernand Braudel constructed his famous historical paradigm, integrating land and sea, focusing on the Mediterranean from a broad perspective, and ultimately framing the maritime space as a major independent historical actor. Braudel spoke of a 'Mediterranean Atlantic' referring to the maritime space stretching roughly from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Canary Islands and including the archipelagos of Madeira and São Tomé. While Braudel's work has been subject to ample scrutiny and criticism in recent decades, his insights regarding the expansive and 'pulsating' nature of the Mediterranean can still serve as a source of inspiration for scholars intent on mapping cross-cultural encounters.[1]

The main interest of the Spanish conquistadors in the 'Atlantic Mediterranean' area, and in particular in the Canary Islands, was sugar production and trade. Between the late fifteenth century and the early decades of the following century, the newcomers established sugar plantations which transformed and permanently altered the Canary landscape. Sugar production soon created the need for a great labour demand, which resulted in the traffic of enslaved people. Usually, they were taken from the North African coast and Guinea and brought to the Canary Islands, and at a later stage some of them were also transported to the American continents.[2]

1 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, pp. 168–230; Horden, 'The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness?'; Abulafia, 'Mediterraneans'.

2 Braudel, *La Méditerranée*, pp. 151–52.

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At the time, European seafarers and conquerors brought the three continents into sudden interaction, turning the oceans into a stage for important intercontinental exchanges and migrations, a space often defined as a 'liquid continent'.[3] In this context, numerous studies have paid special attention to the migrations of African groups, as their trajectories and biographies hold the memory of such changes and dynamics. Just as the concept of a 'Black Atlantic' gained prominence following the publication of Paul Gilroy's book of that name (1995), there has also been a growing discourse surrounding a 'Black Mediterranean'.[4]

Precisely at the heart of this 'liquid continent' are the Canary Islands. Including the Canary Islands in a broad concept of the Mediterranean means widening the range of connections between people and things, tracing commercial, religious, and identity networks between Europe, Africa, and the New World. The interaction of many different groups of people, such as North Africans, Sub-Saharans, Canarian natives (Amazigh) and Europeans in the archipelago of the Canaries has indeed produced a distinctive cultural environment. In fact, the island chain represents one of the first overseas dominions of the Spanish monarchy, where many enslaved people were forcibly brought from Africa to work on sugar plantations.[5] However, in the case of the Canary Islands, the African influence is twofold: firstly, because the local inhabitants of the islands themselves, the Amazigh, were North African; secondly, many Amazigh, also known as *moriscos*, took refuge in the Canary Islands, while others were deported there as slaves. As a result, this area developed into a unique maritime hub, initially serving as a meeting point between North and West Africa and the European continent, and later connecting with the New World. Like a large vessel, it gathered the stories of people from these regions along with their traditions, religions, and everyday lives.

Coming to the subject of this work, this essay discusses some objects used during ritual practices within African space and their reuse in a new context as revealed in the records of the Spanish inquisitorial trials of enslaved African women accused of witchcraft. In particular, I will analyse the use of three objects — the *carta de tocar*, the *nómina*, and the *bolsa* (discussed in more detail below) — placing them in close correlation with the people who possessed them and recounting some fragments of their history. By doing so, it becomes possible to observe the reshaping and repurposing of devotional objects that were used in ritual practices, stemming from the encounter between Africans and the people of the Canary Islands. The paper

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3 Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World*, p. 1.

4 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*. On the 'Black Mediterranean' see e.g., Black Mediterranean Collective, ed., *The Black Mediterranean*.

5 Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa*; Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind Atlantic*; Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean*; Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*; Santana Pérez and Santana Pérez, *Puertas en el Mar*.

will show how the process of assimilation and the cultural mélange between Africans and Canary people was osmotic and not unidirectional: in fact, if the use of the *carta de tocar* and of the *nómina* clearly shows the assimilation of Catholicism into the material culture of African people, the use of the *bolsa* represents the reuse of an African object in a Catholic context. This specific case study, which exclusively focuses on a territory under the authority of the Spanish monarchy, is relevant from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view. The inquisitorial trials conducted in the Canary Islands span a considerable period of time, ranging from 1505 to 1819. In contrast, the records of the Inquisition in Portuguese territories do not offer the same extensive documentation or chronological coverage, as they are limited to a shorter time frame. Throughout the discussion, it will be shown how the topic of object reuse uniquely intersects with matters of gender, religion, and race, spanning both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic regions.

The Meeting Space in the Mediterranean Atlantic: The Canary Islands

One of the consequences of the Spanish conquest of the Canaries at the end of the fifteenth century was the transformation of the socio-cultural context of the islands, projected from an isolated position to a *plaque tournante* or a hub of intense economic exchanges between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. The new population was composed of merchants (who came from all over Europe), travellers who moored there for days or months, waiting to later reach the New World, enslaved people from Africa, *conversos*, *moriscos*, and conquerors. Spaniards went beyond the mere territorial conquest of the islands: they sought to immediately impose their customs, traditions, and, above all, the Catholic religion, demanding that everyone convert to Catholicism. A district of the Spanish Inquisition was established in the island of Gran Canaria in 1505.[6]

Among the various crimes prosecuted by the Holy Office in Gran Canaria were witchcraft and superstition. Francisco Fajardo Spínola, whose work mainly focused on the procedural aspects of trials, has demonstrated that superstition was the main accusation in many of the Holy Office's trials. With the help of Gustav Henningsen, he calculated that for all the activities of the Holy Office in the Canary Islands — from 1505 to 1820 — superstition crimes covered 16.4 per cent of the total, which, translated into figures, corresponds to 368 out of 2319 cases in total. Of these 368 cases, 307 dealt with women considered witches and whose origin was almost half African and half Canary.[7] The number of women prosecuted in relation to the inhabitants of

6 Moreno Florido, *Mujer y transgresión moral ante el santo oficio en canarias*, pp. 23–24.

7 Fajardo Spínola, *Las víctimas del Santo Oficio*, p. 35.

the Canary Islands is relevant if we take into account that in the north-west of Gran Canaria — the largest island along with Tenerife — between 1526 and 1842 the total population was around 102,294.[8] Within inquisitorial studies, the case of the Canary Islands assumes therefore a privileged position, as this archipelago has unknowingly collected stories of many women from North and sub-Saharan Africa. These stories, in fact, reveal important details about the African diaspora of the early modern age — such as the journey to the new land — and at the same time show enslaved people's memories and their genealogies.

Studies on religious-cultural aspects and ritual practices are mostly absent from this literature; for this reason, I focus on unpublished and unknown sources, preserved in the Museo Canario that pertain to the lives of enslaved or free African individuals abruptly put on trial by inquisitors. These trials, starting from the early sixteenth century and reaching the early nineteenth century, contain exceptional autobiographical information, the so-called *discurso de su vida* (discourse of one's life) or *trazas de vida* (traces of life). These were very significant autobiographical statements made by the prisoners of the Inquisition during their formal interrogation, from which, as James Amelang teaches, hidden identities and cultures emerged. Amelang points out how this practice of autobiographical detail became compulsory in 1561, at the behest of Inquisitor General Fernando de Valdés y Salas, although a certain custom of such procedure was already evident in the preceding years.[9] There had been little work specifically on *trazas de vida* until the appearance of translations of six of these life stories by Richard Kagan and Abigail Dyer.[10] While this appears to be a specific phenomenon concerning the Iberian Peninsula, there is still much work to be done: through the examination of this crucial part of the trials, in fact, it is possible to construct a diachronic line of the processes of Christianisation of local inhabitants and enslaved people.

Reshaping and Repurposing Objects across Gender, Race, and Religion

My research follows in the footsteps of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, which focuses on intermingled ritual practices of the Caribbean.[11] In the Canary Islands, relics of material culture from the post-conquest period are interwoven with intangible memories that have so far been neglected by scholars. Both are the result of an encounter between the newcomers to the islands from different parts of Africa and Europe and the Canary local inhabitants.

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8 Ruiz, *El N.W. de Gran Canaria*, p. 195.
9 Amelang, 'Tracing Lives: The Spanish Inquisition and the Act of Autobiography', pp. 33–48.
10 Kagan and Dyer, *Inquisitorial Inquiries*.
11 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.

Within this context, it is possible to highlight an accumulation of meaning that objects acquired at two distinctive moments: the journey that led them to the new land and the subsequent transformative impact that the object underwent on the new territory.[12] This process involved various aspects of African culture, including the material configuration of objects and their use. The analysis of the trial records enables us to get glimpses of how that may have happened and thus to reflect both on oral knowledge and on the sacred and magical dimension of objects coming from within Africa. The trials, in fact, gathered detailed descriptions of objects used in ritual and healing practices, similar to those that can be found on display in the Museo Canario today. Unlike the life stories, that were mostly produced through the arbitrary use of violence by the inquisitors and are therefore susceptible to at least some form of doubt as to their veracity, objects are the most solid and least altered traces of an unknown past.

As Giorgio Riello proposes, material culture is the process of attributing meaning to objects by people who produced and used them, as objects mediate between the changing identities of individuals as they are drawn into global circuits. By focusing on the description of objects used as evidence in the trials and looking at those objects that still exist today, it is possible not only to collect new information concerning the Mediterranean Atlantic, but also to reconceptualize early modern global history, taking material culture seriously into account in order to investigate hitherto neglected aspects.[13] Starting from such a perspective — which is inevitably multidisciplinary, including anthropology, ethnography, archaeology, art history, and sociology — we are able to understand the attribution of meaning that people in the Canary Islands, especially those enslaved, gave to the objects they used. The resulting interpretation aims to go beyond the simple functioning or structure of the object, by creating geographical connections that are reflected in the social life of the people who used it or who came into contact with it. The object, in a way, embodies the personal paths of the individuals who possessed and carried it from one place to another, retracing what Gosden and Marshall refer to as the 'biography of objects', which is able to divulge trajectories, stories, and relationships. The biographies of both the object and the people are intricately intertwined, becoming inseparable from each other.[14] In our case, objects were closely linked to the person who owned them, as person and thing were united by the spiritual or even magical sphere which both the person and the thing inhabited.

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12 Callon, 'The Sociology of an Actor-Network', pp. 19–34; Callon, 'Techno-Economic Networks and Irreversibility', pp. 132–64; Callon and Latour, 'Unscrewing the Big Leviathan', pp. 277–303.

13 Gerritsen and Riello, eds, *The Global Lives of Things*, pp. 2–13; Riello and McNeil, eds, *The Fashion History Reader: Global Perspectives*.

14 Gosden and Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects'; see also Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things*.

The multi-layered significance of such objects is grasped unconsciously by the inquisitor who, in collecting these objects as 'proof of the demonic pact', leaves the historian with the possibility of a closer analysis that can comprehend the encounter-collision of African beliefs and cults with other forms of religiosity and cults as different as that of the local inhabitants of the Canary Islands first or the Spanish later. The inquisitor unconsciously leads us to know objects and their meanings: during the witnesses' deposition and the interrogation of the alleged witches he underlines the importance of such objects in the deployment of magical practices, considering them as a means of proof. The consideration that the inquisitor has for the object leads him to question the use that the witch makes of it, noting and recording every detail. In this very moment it is possible to grasp what Carlo Ginzburg called 'an involuntary act of conscience', which escaped the inquisitor's attention. The analysis of such moments helps us to study the context, avoiding a Eurocentric approach.

If objects (reused, reshaped, repurposed) are the result of a set of conditions and a sum of actions, studying the relationships between objects and people who owned them and their trajectories across different continents means tracking and drawing a network in a global perspective. When objects leave the spatial boundaries of a certain territory, or — as in this case — a continent, they carry and move fragments of material and immaterial cultures that inevitably create links with the lands of origin. From time to time, people assign objects meanings that are inserted in the new context, one shaped by knowledge and belief, different from the previous one. In the Canary case study, objects and their uses conceal the need to safeguard an identity uprooted and compromised by the loss of territorial consistency and which ended up being sublimated in the newly Catholic context. Analysing the objects of the Canary Islands from this perspective allows us to understand the reuse and reshaping they underwent in the new space to which they were transported or reproduced. In fact, if we carry out this analysis for the entire period of activity of the Holy Office in the area, it is possible to show how the knowledge and practices of the enslaved people, who came from faraway, were memorized, reinterpreted, and reshaped by their descendants.

In addition to this, the materials produced by the Canarian Court in superstition trials provide a valuable gender perspective, as they preserve the biographical trace of enslaved women and offer the opportunity to study the material and immaterial culture of the alleged witches.[15] Often the alleged witch or sorcerer of African origin claimed to have brought some objects from the homeland, such as horns, beads, ancestor dust, shells, wooden boxes, charms, and bags. Among the objects that assumed a magical-religious importance were relics, ritual tools often used by people of African heritage to protect themselves from imminent danger or for good luck. Creoles strongly believed

15 Rosia, *Powerful Magic*; Zamora Calvo, ed., *Women, Witchcraft and the Inquisition*.

in the reproduction of objects that protected the person such as crosses, pieces of canvas stolen from cassocks, hosts, and images of saints.[16] During the trials, these objects were implicitly and naturally described by accused women as indispensable tools for everyday life, built through the teachings of the ancestors, which could sometimes be used to establish specific contacts with the spirits that protected them. Such objects were not usual for the European population; ignorance may have played a role in shaping their perception as demonic, but it is highly likely that the descriptions provided during the trials greatly alarmed the inquisitors, reinforcing the idea that they were dealing with witchcraft. The inquisitor would then calculate the witch's assets: the description of the items and commodities was very important to the inquisitor who underlined and emphasized the objects' value like proofs of the *tacitum* or *expressum* (silent or express) pact with the devil.

In addition, we should not overlook the asymmetrical relationship between an illiterate black woman, accused of witchcraft, and her accuser — a Spanish man, a white judge, and of proven Catholic faith. With a hint of malice, it becomes evident how the woman's words and intentions were twisted, leading to the transition from devotional objects into instruments of the Inquisition.

In fact, compared with the studies carried out in Europe with this methodology, the case of the Canary Islands offers an even greater cultural variety between the inquisitor and the accused person, who often came from very different contexts. For this reason, *discurso de su vida/trazas de vida* and the trial records prove to be an invaluable source: once the cultural accommodation to the new Canary context had occurred, modifying the object's meaning on the religious and devotional plane, precisely that new set of beliefs and actions was analysed and demonized by the inquisitors.

Bolsa, *Nómina*, and *Carta de Tocar*: One or Three Different Objects?

One of the main objects involved in the processes was the *bolsa*, a small cloth or leather bag worn around the neck. *Bolsas* were considered by their wearers to be powerful amulets. They could contain stones, hair, nails, and ancestor dust. All of these items were considered essential by people of African heritage, especially those enslaved, who were trying to survive a harsh daily life. Each object possessed different virtues, the most important being to protect the enslaved person from quarrels with other people of the same condition and from mistreatment by the master.[17] On the coasts of Guinea and Mina, Europeans found similar objects which they called *Mandingas bolsas*, presumably indicating the origin of the *bolsa* (Fig. 4.1). This term was attributed to

16 Restrepo Zea, 'La formación de la memoria', pp. 79–100.

17 Maya Restrepo, *Brujería y reconstrucción de identidades entre los Africanos*, p. 721.

Jesuit Father Balthazar Barreira, who described the practices of the Mandinga — the people of West and Central Africa — in 1606.[18] The original term for such an object is supposed to be *gris gris*, a term of Senegalese origin that translates as 'magic' or 'enchantment', mainly used in Voodoo ceremonies.[19]

One of the few sources for the study of *bolsas* is the *De instauranda Æthiopum salute* (1647) by the Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval which contains many references to the Mandinga people. Sandoval believed that the Mandinga people communicated with all the kingdoms of Guinea in order to trade gold and salt. In his opinion they also went far beyond this border to convert people to Islam. The spread of Islam was facilitated by their language skills, as the Mandinga knew the languages of the Iolophos, Berbesies, Mandingas, and Fulos peoples.[20] This aspect is noteworthy as it helps explain how the *bolsas* also spread to North African territories including the Canary Islands, which geographically belong to the North of the African continent. From here also came the first inhabitants of the islands, the Amazigh.

Figure 4.1. Bolsa Mandinga. Reproduced with the permission of the Museo di Antropologia e Etnologia – Università di Firenze

The use of *bolsas* has been extensively studied in the Atlantic context, excluding the Canary Islands. Scholars who have dealt with this subject in other areas of the Atlantic have done so using mainly Portuguese inquisitorial sources

18 Adogame and others, eds, *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora*, p. 193.
19 O'Neill Schmitt and O'Neill, *New Orleans Voodoo*, p. 18.
20 Sandoval, *De instauranda Æthiopum salute*, p. 47; Guerrero-Mosquera, 'Bolsas mandingas en Cartagena de Indias', p. 87.

about the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[21] As far as the territories of the Spanish monarchy are concerned, the phenomenon pertaining to the circulation and use of *bolsas* has only been analysed in the Caribbean for the seventeenth century.[22] After arriving in the Canary Islands — which, as has been mentioned, were the first overseas Inquisitorial district of both Spain and Portugal — the *bolsas* were brought by enslaved people to the rest of the Atlantic and to the New World. By studying the history of *bolsas* through the Canary trials it is possible therefore to grasp a phenomenon that in later periods has usually been located in regions further to the west — such as Cartagena de Indias, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Brazil. Furthermore, by acknowledging this, one can sketch an analysis of the phenomenon's development over a precise chronological span — in our case something which coincides with the establishment of the inquisitorial court in the Canary Islands and its suppression (1505–1834).

At the beginning of the sixteenth century *bolsas* were still not known to the inquisitors as a 'magic tool', whereas after a few decades they became a clear proof of an implicit or explicit pact with the devil. Initially, references to *bolsas* indicated a generic container of everyday and common use; over time inquisitors identified them as magical objects. Very often these *bolsas* contained not only stones and amulets, but also prayers to saints belonging to the Catholic religion.

The first reference to a *bolsa* in the Atlantic overseas territories can be found in 1524 in the acts of witnesses in the Canary Islands.[23] Ynes Garcìa was denounced for the use of certain objects for the performance of witchcraft. Among the objects is mentioned the *piedra de ara* (a piece of stone taken from an altar), a sheet of paper used in front of an altar, and a grain — which was considered to be one of the main indications of magical rites.[24] Shortly afterwards, the inquisitor writes some *marginalia* (comments at the side of the folio): 'she carried some things like these, which one does not know what they are, in a *bolsilla* made of velvet'.[25] This written space, the *marginalia*, is where it is possible to understand the gap between the witness's view and that of the inquisitor. At that time, the latter did not seem to have any knowledge of what a *bolsa* was and what it was for. It is thanks to this unawareness that

21 Santos, 'As bolsas de mandinga no espaço atlântico'; Buono Calainho, *Metrópole das Mandinga*; Buono Calainho, 'Mandingueiros negros no mundo atlântico moderno'; Fromont, 'Paper, Ink, Vodun, and the Inquisition'; Gómez, 'Transatlantic Meanings', pp. 125–42.

22 Gómez, *The Experiential Caribbean*.

23 Las Palmas, Archivo Museo Canario, Coll. Bute, II, first series, fol. 36.

24 Las Palmas, Archivo Museo Canario, Coll. Bute, II, first series, fol. 42. The *helecho* grain appears very often in the trials of alleged witches; Fajardo Spínola had found a *helecho* grain in a trial of a woman from Tenerife (1658), attached as trial evidence. Unfortunately, the grain and the paper where it had been stored for centuries have been lost. See Fajardo Spínola, *Hechicería y brujería en Canarias*, p. 118.

25 Las Palmas, Archivo Museo Canario, Coll. Bute, II, first series, fol. 42^{r}.

it is possible to detect the first reference to the use of the *bolsa* in the Canary Islands.[26]

In the following centuries, the presence of *bolsas* became the automatic proof that those who possessed them were to be considered witches. It is possible to find the *bolsa* in the words of witnesses, in the inventories of the witches' belongings, and in the inquisitors' words. In one instance, it was found that the bag contained 'pieces of stone [possibly, *piedra de ara*], some sheets of evangelical prayer, two pierced figures, one with needles and the other with pins, and other sheets of cloth among different things'.[27] Two centuries later the use of *bolsas* had become almost endemic: 'In Tenerife all the ladies wear a *bolsa* around their necks to achieve whatever they desire'.[28] It is clear that the inquisitor was now familiar with the *bolsa* and its use.

The second object that appears frequently in Portuguese sources and sometimes in the Canary Islands is the *nómina*. Often in inquisitorial texts, the *bolsa* can be found under the name of *nómina*. *Nóminas* were known in Europe even before *bolsas* and perhaps this is why — especially in the early sixteenth century — when *bolsas* began to circulate in the Canary Islands, they were mistakenly called *nóminas* by the inquisitors, so much so that at this point, one may wonder whether *bolsa* and *nómina* meant the same thing. Given the similarity between the two objects, so strong that it misled the inquisitors and probably even the witnesses, it is perhaps possible to assume that from the beginning they were not two different objects at all, even though it is really not clear.

In the Canary Islands, outside of the Portuguese context, there are, in fact, a few cases — although limited — in which instead of the word *bolsa* the word *nómina* is used, but with two different meanings. In the first case, *nómina* means *bolsa*; in the second case, *nómina* refers to small prints of saints known in the Iberian Peninsula, in Sicily, and sometimes in the Canary Islands as both *nómina* and *carta de tocar*.[29] It is maybe not by chance that in Sicily at the time *nómina* meant 'amulet': the island was not only part of the Spanish dominions but was populated by enslaved people, former enslaved people and *moriscos*.[30] The *carta de tocar*, in the Kingdom of Sicily, could be parchment or made of dried amniotic membrane.[31] *Carta de tocar* is also to

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26 Gómez, *The Experiential Caribbean*, claimed that the first *bolsa* to appear in sources from the Atlantic context was in the 1620s. This valuable data invites us to reflect on the important role of the Canary Islands in the early spread of rituals and practices from Africa, offering new insights into the diffusion of these traditions in the Caribbean during the 1620s.

27 'Se encontró que la bolsa contenía: pedasos de piedra que jusgo segun su color que son de piedra de ara, y unos papel escritos de oracion evangelios y dos figuras atrabesadas la una con agujas y otra con alfileres y otros papellitos con diferentes cosas'. Las Palmas, Archivo Museo Canario, Coll. Bute, XVII, second series, 1633–1640.

28 Fajardo Spínola, *Hechicería y brujería en Canarias*, p. 86.

29 Messana, *Il Santo Ufficio dell'Inquisizione*, p. 137.

30 Messana, *Il Santo Ufficio dell'Inquisizione*, p. 181.

31 Messana, *Inquisitori, negromanti e streghe*, pp. 338–39.

Figure 4.2. Carta de tocar. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, El Museo Canario, Archivo Inquisición, 160.001, 77r. Reproduced with the permission of El Museo Canario.

be found in Portugal. José Pedro Paiva describes them as pieces of paper with images and scriptures, used as tools of protection and love magic. He also perceives their use as love-charms.[32] It is precisely for this purpose that its use in the Canary Islands is discernible. In fact, a rare example of *carta de tocar* is also to be found in the Canary Islands trials: the object was seized from the alleged witch and attached to the acts as proof of the pact with the devil (Fig. 4.2). The mention of *nómina* in the Canary Islands with the meaning commonly attributed to *carta de tocar* in Sicily and in Portugal can show how the Mediterranean was connected to the Atlantic via the African continent through the circulation — and the simultaneous modification — of material and immaterial knowledge.

As can be glimpsed from the picture, the *carta de tocar* has writing on the inside and is sewn, as well as being turned upside down. The act of writing on a votive image, sewing it up, and turning it inside out was considered profoundly sacrilegious by the Catholic Church and consequently by the Holy Office. Other sacrilegious practices, strongly prosecuted and repressed by the Holy Office of the Canary Islands, included *ligatura* and *disligatura*. This practice is part of love rites; the expression *estar ligado* (to be bound or tied) derives from the belief that a spell was capable of producing any kind of paralysis or immobility in the body.[33] The effects or symptoms of this binding, which witnesses very often recount in trials, could range from a lack of appetite and difficulty in moving to male impotence. In the case of impotence, as expressed by the term 'being tied', in order to break this spell, it was necessary to refer to the practice of untying (undoing knots, cutting a ribbon); in this way it was possible to symbolically undo that tie. This practice appears frequently in the Court of the Holy Office of Cuenca and, even though it was associated with impotence, it was a matter of public knowledge and strongly intertwined with the curses of witches.[34]

The fact that in the Canary Islands the inquisitors and witnesses used both *nómina* and *carta de tocar* indifferently could depend on the inquisitors' and witnesses' lack of knowledge about the use of these objects — probably because some of them were still unfamiliar with the use of the *bolsa* as a magical object. As mentioned above, the Mandinga maintained trade relations with North Africa for centuries and they came into contact with Islam, becoming cultural brokers and influencing the economic, religious, and political framework of people with whom they came into contact. Among the Mandinga were the *baxerins*, Islamic missionaries whose task was to preach Islam and distribute *nóminas* to the population. *Nóminas* were distributed throughout the whole of Guinea. In the accounts of preachers, such as that of André de Faro, it is

32 Paiva, 'Inquisizione e stregoneria in Portogallo nella prima età moderna', pp. 116.

33 Schmitz, *Los Enfermos en la España Barroca*, pp. 219–20.

34 Schmitz, *Los Enfermos en la España Barroca*, p. 217; Messana, *Inquisitori, negromanti e streghe*, p. 71.

said that there were leather bags that contained pieces of paper and were to be worn for protection.[35]

The first reference to a *nómina* in the Canary Islands is found in the trial of an alleged witch in 1587. Ysabel Perez from the small island of La Palma was arrested because 'She wore a *nómina* around her neck and inside the *nómina* were some forbidden things such as a piece of *piedra de ara*, some fern grains and a prayer to *Santa Marta*'.[36] The reference to a *nómina* appears again a few years later in the trial of Maria Garcia (1606–1608), from Villa de Terror (born in the town of Terror). In the witness book we read the following lines:

> She used sacred objects for her rituals, such as the *piedra de ara*, and had convinced other people to find other pieces because it was very impressive. She wore a witch's *nómina* with which she convinced people with her tricks [...]. The *nómina* was made of blue taffeta inside of which there was a white stone that was supposedly used to perform her rituals.[37]

The extract from these two trials makes it clear that the object described was used to contain and protect, so it was almost certainly a *bolsa*. In particular, Maria said that she did not know these remedies, but that she herself turned to a 'black woman' who knew them well. The alleged witch declared that she had personally gone to this woman who advised her to take a bushel of wheat and mix it with some white powders that were then to be drunk in a bowl with *gofio*.[38] It is clear how, in order to learn certain remedies, Maria had turned to a woman described as 'black' — therefore probably sub-Saharan — who lived in her own town. In this case, Maria's role was to mediate between a third person requesting the ritual and the woman who, thanks to her knowledge, was able to provide 'remedies'. Once again, the *piedra de ara* kept in a *nómina* (but more probably a *bolsa*) appears among the objects of magic. Once again, the confusion between *nómina* and *bolsa* recurs.

Highlighting this confusion and processing it is only the first step necessary to contextualize the material circulation of objects and especially their reuse. From the registers of these trials, we have seen how the meanings of *bolsa* and *nómina* are used and can be traced back to the Afro-Catholic semantic sphere. Indeed, in addition to presenting purely Catholic elements such as prayers to the saints, the altar stone (*piedra de ara*) itself was one of the most

35 Guerrero-Mosquera, *Bolsas mandingas*, pp. 69–93.

36 Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, 1829, 1º-I fol. 3.

37 Las Palmas, Archivo Museo Canario, Coll. Bute, VII, fol. 205^{r}–215^{v}.

38 *Gofio* is a typical food in the Canary Islands. It is a flour made from roasted cereals, mainly maize or wheat. This food was fundamental in the diet of the local inhabitants of the Canary Islands. Indeed, its high nutritional value made it essential for survival during periods of famine in the archipelago. The locals cultivated, roasted, and ground barley to obtain *gofio*, which they then mixed with other foods, such as honey and goat's milk.

widespread amulets, first in West Africa and then in North Africa.[39] While it is still unclear today what the actual difference between *nómina* and *bolsa* was, we could venture to formulate a hypothesis. Perhaps, the difference between the two objects lies trivially in form and substance: the *nómina* consisted of the written word and took the form of a small piece of paper, itself considered a talisman to be carried to ensure protection for the wearer. Anthropological studies show how some sub-Saharan African societies associate the word with the Supreme Being, creator of all things. It therefore holds the power to create and manifest what is desired. In it therefore resides the performative power of reality. From this we can understand how African people used orations in the context of ritual practices. In the Canary Islands, Amazigh people, North African, and sub-Saharan African people offered these prayers to the saints. Among the most frequently used prayers are those to St Martha, St Helena, St John, and St Mark. Here the prayers themselves are best considered as objects, in the form of a *nómina*. The *nómina* could be kept in a *bolsa*, which was made of leather or silk and served mainly for protection, inside which further objects of magic could be placed without distorting its value.

These three objects — *bolsa*, *nómina*, and *carta de tocar* — were mistakenly confused by the inquisitors who probably could not make clear distinctions between them. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that in the lengthy trials, we sometimes read the name of *bolsa* in the indictments, and then in later pages the same object transforms into *carta de tocar* simply because a witness or the alleged witch herself called it that way. From the middle of the seventeenth century, there are no longer any references to the *nómina*, but only to the *bolsa*. It was probably at this time that the inquisitors began to become familiar with it and recognize the differences between the three objects.

Conclusions

In the early modern age, three continents — Africa, Europe, and America — began to interact with each other in entirely new ways. One of the hubs of these interactions was the Canary Islands, a 'Mediterranean Atlantic' that historians can use as an observational vantage point for understanding the flow of peoples and things that connected the three continents.

Throughout this essay, an attempt has been made to analyse the objects in motion connected to the ritual practices of enslaved women accused of being witches by the Spanish Inquisition in the Canary Islands. A large number of the women put on trial were of African origin, coming from North Africa and West Africa. While studying the actors involved enables us to delve deeper

39 The question therefore arises as to whether the *piedra de ara* was already known in the Canary Islands before the Spanish conquest. Indeed, this possibility cannot be ruled out since the local population was of North African origin.

into intersecting discourses about race, gender, and religion, the analysis of the geographical spaces in which ritual practices took place is instrumental in uncovering the successive reshaping and repurposing of people, things, and practices at the same time. Moving from one place to another, people and their 'cultural baggage' developed progressively, incorporating new elements, until they reached their land of destination. Here, objects invested with magic, spiritual, and devotional meanings were used and reused both by people coming from Africa and by the local inhabitants, underlining their malleability and their capacity to bridge different communities.

This phenomenon of cultural adaptation was in fact osmotic, as it arose when people from different cultures came into contact. By using a micro-historical approach devoted to the study of material cultures it is possible to investigate the reuse of *Mandingas bolsas*, objects first exclusively used as talismans and then reframed as bags for Catholic prayers, which themselves become new talismans. However, it is precisely the analysis of such reuses that enabled me to highlight the 'confusion' concerning their categorization by inquisitors: as we have seen, there was and still is much confusion between *bolsa* on the one hand, and *nómina*/*carta de tocar* on the other. However confused they may have been, the involvement of inquisitors in the process of becoming of these objects underscores the role that different types of violence could play in this regard, from the drive to conversion to the threat of persecution and the defining force of the inquisitor's need to transform a devotional object into a piece of physical evidence.

ABSTRACT This article analyses the use of certain objects in ritual practices within African cultures and their reuse in a different context, specifically the Canary Islands. The analysis is based on documents from Spanish inquisitorial trials involving enslaved African women accused of witchcraft. These documents provide detailed information about the enslaved people who were transported to the Canary Islands from the Maghreb and West Africa and focus particularly on the material culture associated with their religious devotion. The objects they owned and used, such as *bolsa*, were made in Africa or reproduced in the Canary Islands. The aim of this paper is to examine how these objects were transformed as a result of their encounter with the Canarian environment and how they were perceived by Spanish inquisitors, evolving from objects of religious devotion to objects of inquisitorial interest.

KEYWORDS *bolsa*, *nómina*, *carta de tocar*, Inquisition, enslaved people, Canary Islands

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ODED COHEN

Manuscripts from Western Europe, Printer from the Land of Israel

Movement between Cultural Spaces in Hebrew Printing in the Eighteenth Century

The early modern period in the Jewish world is characterized by both physical movement and the more abstract movement of concepts and knowledge between geographical and cultural spaces.[1] In these movements, wandering Jews — in the form of rabbinic emissaries, vagabonds, immigrants, pilgrims, book printers, and opportunists — played a central role.[2] These wandering Jews, who moved between different cultural spaces and printing centres, and who were (sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously) agents of knowledge and culture, occasionally experienced the cultural effects of the journey on the ways in which they perceived themselves and the societies they encountered on their travels. Various studies published in the last two decades, especially in the context of general history and less of the Jewish one, have placed a spotlight on the cross-cultural influx and exchange of knowledge, the role and importance of cultural mediators, and multiplicity and identity exchange.[3] In this article I seek to integrate into this methodological context

1 For example: Kaplan, 'Wayward New Christians and Stubborn New Jews'; Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World*.

2 On the beginning of the rabbinic emissary as an institution in the early modern period and the significant increase in the number of emissaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries see: Reiner, 'The Leadership of the Community in Jerusalem at the End of the Mamluk Period' [in Hebrew]; Ben-Naeh, 'The Istanbul Jewish Community and its Ties with the Jews in Eretz-Israel in the 17th Century' [in Hebrew]; Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, pp. 7–14.

3 For example: Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels*; Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople*; Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities*; Rothman, *Brokering Empire*. On mental changes as a result of physical journeys see: Thompson, *Travel Writing*; Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance*.

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and trace the journey of Benjamin Me'eli HaKohen, an eighteenth-century 'wandering Jew', examining the ways in which his travels and experiences in the world of Hebrew printing in Europe were reflected in his literary choices at different stages of his wanderings, and in the way he was perceived — by himself and by others.

From Jerusalem to Livorno

Benjamin Me'eli HaKohen set out from his home in Jerusalem for Italy shortly before 1764. That year, he edited the book *Hemdat Yamim* in Livorno before it was printed at Moses Attias's press in that city.[4] Benjamin was the offspring of a family of religious scholars, authors, and printers. His father, Hayyim Shalom Me'eli HaKohen, engaged in editing and typesetting in Istanbul in the 1720s.[5] His grandfather, Benjamin Me'eli HaKohen, served as head of rabbinical courts in Cairo and Jerusalem.[6] It therefore seemed only natural that Benjamin would make his way to the world of Hebrew printing and books. Indeed, he would intensify his involvement in these fields in the 1770s and the 1780s. In a letter he wrote in 1772, while living in Amsterdam, to his friend Israel Gedaliah Cazes of Mantua,[7] Benjamin describes his settling in Amsterdam and his literary endeavours in that city, which had become the most important centre of the Hebrew book and printing industries in eighteenth-century Western Europe.[8] In his very first literary work, however, or at least in the first known to us — his edition of *Hemdat Yamim* in Livorno — Benjamin explains what motivated him to leave Jerusalem, and to insert himself, almost by chance, into literary activity as an editor. In a brief appendix to the book, Benjamin attests that he had left Jerusalem due to distress that originated in his father's death, among other factors:

> Being in my native city, the holy city, I did not rest and anger came because of our many sins, my father died and many troubles afflicted me until I had to leave my father's house and my native land to the land of the nations. On long roads and few supplies until I came to the sprawling city of Livorno.[9]

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4 On Attias and his press see: Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, pp. 198–207. There is a great deal of research literature on *Hemdat Yamim*, a large part of which tries to establish the identity of its author and his relation to the Sabbatianism. For a review of the literature on the subject see: Cohen, 'Parodic Purim Literature in the Early Modern Era and the Ban that Failed', pp. 110–11 n. 42.

5 Yaari, *Hebrew Printing at Constantinople*.

6 See: Gaon, *Eastern Jews in the Land of Israel*, pp. 444–45. [Hebrew].

7 On Cazes see: Salah, *La République des lettres: rabbins, écrivains et médecins juifs en Italie au XVIIIe siècle*, pp. 137–39.

8 Dunkelgrün, ed., *The Jewish Bookshop of the World*.

9 *Hemdat Yamim*, p. 122[a].

Later in the appendix, he describes how he had established his connection with Moses Attias when he reached Livorno:

> And it is known that all beginnings are difficult and the grace of God has given me grace in the eyes of this man Moses, a man of valour, lover of the Torah and its disciples, whose home is wide open. The exalted gentleman, pursuer of charity Rabbi Moses Atias […] and on that day I found him to have brought to print part 1 and 2 of the nice book *Hemdat Yamim*, and behold, this is the day that he chose me to stand and serve him and to be an editor to the other parts of the book.[10]

Attias, who had opened his printing house in the city four years earlier and won a government monopoly on printing Hebrew letters in Livorno,[11] printed *Hemdat Yamim* in four volumes. The first and second volumes were printed in 1762 and 1763, and towards the time of the printing of the other two volumes of the book, in 1764 he appointed Benjamin as the editor. Benjamin's phrasing when describing being chosen for this position — 'Behold, this is the day that he chose me to stand and serve him and to be an editor'— is heavy with significant liturgical and biblical allusions. His use of the phrase 'this is the day', for example, alludes to the festive verse 'This is the day that the Lord has made — let us exult and rejoice on it' (Psalms 118. 24), which is recited as part of the festive Jewish prayer called 'Hallel' ('Hallel' means praise). Furthermore, the expressions he uses to note Attias's choice of him are suggestive of divine selection. 'Who chose me' refers to the blessing over the Torah that is recited every morning and by everyone who is called to the Torah during the service: 'Blessed are You […] who chose us from among all the nations and gave us His Torah'. Finally, the expression 'to stand and serve' alludes to a verse that deals with the divine selection of the Kohanim from the tribe of Levi (befitting Benjamin, a Kohen): 'For your God has chosen him and his descendants, out of all your tribes, to stand and serve in the name of God for all time' (Deuteronomy 18. 5).

This choice of words suggests that Benjamin saw the editing and printing of books as his destiny. He presents his integration into the important printing world of Livorno, but he does so while emphasizing his belonging to the Land of Israel, which he had reluctantly left. Fulfilling his mission as an editor in Livorno's printing centre does not come at the expense of the central place of the Land of Israel in his identity.

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10 *Hemdat Yamim*, p. 122[a].

11 Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, pp. 204–05.

Northern Europe

Benjamin's image of himself as the man from the Land of Israel, who was 'destined' to engage in book printing, whose physical movement between different cultural and geographical spaces and exposure to certain cultural worlds had brought him into this world and outlined his literary work, is reflected strongly in his literary activity in the years following his stay in Livorno. In 1770, Benjamin was working with a press in the northern German city of Altona, 1500 km north of Livorno, not far from Hamburg. There, he arranged the printing of three books, which had already been printed before, in the sixteenth century: R. Abraham ibn Ezra's *Yesod Mora*, a book about the commandments of the Torah;[12] a grammar work, also by R. Abraham ibn Ezra, titled *Sefer Moznaim*;[13] and another grammar book, *Pirqe Rabbi Elia,* by the Renaissance Hebrew grammarian, Elia Levita.[14] In his introductions to the two works by ibn Ezra, Benjamin reports an encounter that he had had a short time earlier in Copenhagen with a central personality in the Haskalah movement, Naphtali Hirz Wessely. Their meeting took place no earlier than 1768, when Wessely returned to his hometown of Copenhagen,[15] and no later than 1770, when the books were printed.

It is evident that Wessely had an influence on Benjamin's literary choices. In his introduction to *Sefer Moznaim*, Benjamin describes this encounter as part of his mission to Copenhagen as an emissary from the Tiberias community and explains that on this occasion he was exposed to a series of grammar books by Wessely, which he found hard to understand:

> When I was on God's mission for the holy city of Tiberias to the community of Copenhagen, there I saw one wise among a thousand have I found.[16] Wise and brave, with the power of wisdom and science. The miraculous and perfect rabbi in all respects, our teacher, Rabbi Naphtali Hirtz Wessely, may God preserve him. And when I talked with him, he brought me to the House of the Sages, which he built with wisdom founded with the cedars of Lebanon. And my eyes were enlightened because I tasted wisdom and

12 First printed in Constantinople in 1520 and again in Venice in 1566.

13 First printed in Venice in 1546.

14 First printed in Venice in 1520 and again in Venice in 1546.

15 Wessely stayed in Amsterdam until 1767, when he moved to Hamburg. During 1768 he moved from Hamburg to Copenhagen. This conclusion stems from the fact that on 22 January 1768, the poet and playwright David Franco Mendes sent a letter from Amsterdam to Wessely, who was staying in Hamburg — Melkman, *David Franco Mendes*, pp. 150–51 n. 1 — but later that year, Wessely sent a letter from Copenhagen to Moses Mendelssohn in Berlin and the Hebrew date of the letter is Elul 5528, i.e. August–September 1768 — Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, pp. 120–23.

16 According to Ecclesiastes 7. 28: 'Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: One man among a thousand have I found'.

> I came into the room and lifted my eyes and saw in the window a locked garden, a sealed-up spring.[17]

In the meeting with Wessely, Benjamin was exposed to *Lebanon* — Wessely's series of grammar books, of which the grammar book '*Gan Ne'ul*' (locked garden) was intended to be a part. Unfortunately, the locked garden was indeed locked to Benjamin, who had difficulty understanding the contents of the books. The solution, from Benjamin's standpoint, was to revert to the medieval grammarian R. Abraham ibn Ezra, for which reason he decided to print *Sefer Moznaim*: 'And I said to which of holy beings shall I go? And where shall I turn but to the great Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra who carved and weighed in scales (Moznaim)'.[18] For Benjamin, at least on a declarative level, ibn Ezra serves as a key to understanding Wessely's books, and he concludes by saying: 'So I said that it is good and pleasant to print a book to benefit the many'.[19]

After the encounter in Copenhagen convinced Benjamin that ibn Ezra's grammar book should be printed, he sought to accomplish this a short time later in Altona along with another grammatical work, that of Elia Levita. However, he made the short trip from Copenhagen to Altona armed not only with insights about the books that he should print, but also with two manuscripts that he brought with him on his way south — *Ner Elohim* by Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (YaShaR of Candia), an intellectual investigation of the rationales behind the commandments,[20] and *Ruah Hen*, Wessely's translation of and commentary on the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon*.[21] Benjamin describes this on the title page of the other work by ibn Ezra that he published in Altona in 1770, *Yesod Mora*. On the bottom of the title page of *Yesod Mora*, he turns to the public, explains his goal — to print both of the manuscripts that he had brought — and asks them to help him by paying for the books in advance, before they are printed. In this appeal, Benjamin, once again, presents himself as a person who came from the Holy Land with an almost heaven-sent commission to engage in the craft of printing:

> While on the mission of the Holy City of Tiberias to the Copenhagen community I found these essays […] So I said, may these important things be printed for they are the essential parts of the Torah. My beloved spoke thus to me: 'Whoever reads the letter will carry it out'. Even though the printing expenses are many, Israel is holy. Well, everyone whose heart prompts them to give will participate in the work.[22]

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17 Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznaim*, Publisher's introduction [p. 7].
18 Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznaim*, Publisher's introduction [p. 7].
19 Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznaim*, Publisher's introduction [p. 7].
20 See Barzilay, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo*, pp. 98–99.
21 See Pelli, *Haskalah and Beyond*, pp. 57–58.
22 Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora*, title page.

Benjamin presented himself as a person who carries with him important manuscripts — the essential parts of the Torah'— that he is destined to print. The instruction 'Whoever reads the letter will carry it out', which originates in the Midrashic dialogue between Moses and Phinehas regarding the killing of Zimri, son of Salu, and Cozbi, daughter of Tzur (Numbers 25),[23] came to Benjamin from the mouth of 'the beloved', who, in the allegorical reading of the Song of Songs (from which Benjamin's words 'My beloved answered and told me' are taken)[24] is God. He is therefore saying that 'the beloved', namely God, is the one who assigned him the task.

The fact that Benjamin entered into the world of books and printing as a man who had internalized his calling finds expression not only in his self-image and in the way he regards and presents himself, but also in his internalization of the target readerships of the books that he wishes to print and the direct and indirect ways in which they should be approached. He matches his explanation of his decision to print ibn Ezra's books, as well as Elia Levita's and the two manuscripts that he had brought from Copenhagen, to the values of the cultural world that he inhabits, namely that of the Western Sephardi diaspora (because he situated himself in the Sephardi community of Hamburg). In the title page of *Yesod Mora* Benjamin emphasizes that 'I live among my own people, the holy Sephardi community of Hamburg'.[25] On the title page of ibn Ezra's second book, *Sefer Moznaim*, which Benjamin published in the same year and in the same place, he calls the author 'the great Rabbi Avraham ben Meir the Sephardi, known as ibn Ezra',[26] and emphasizes that this is a very rare book: 'It was printed for the first time in the year 5306 (1546), and a long time has passed since then, and the earlier ones are not remembered,[27] God roused the spirit of one man from the holy city of Jerusalem to print it'.[28]

Benjamin, now active in the world of books and printing, understands very well the significance of the rare book as a material object. Since the importance of that object is great, it is appropriate to redeem it from its rarity and allow anyone who is interested access to the object. As he does so, he reaches out to this community in a way that befits his heritage and confirms his image as a printer-litterateur who sees this trade as his calling.

Benjamin presents himself as someone who came from the Land of Israel and belongs to its cultural landscape, a fact that gives him prestige and importance. At the same time, however, he sees himself in cultural terms and construes his literary activity as an affiliate of the Western Sephardi diaspora would. He is the one who is returning this population's cultural literary treasures

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23 Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin, 82a.

24 Song of Songs 2. 10.

25 Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora*, title page.

26 Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznaim*, title page.

27 According to Ecclesiastes 1. 11: 'The earlier ones are not remembered; so too those that will occur later will no more be remembered than those that will occur at the very end'.

28 Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznaim*, title page.

to their owner by publishing the writings of R. Abraham ibn Ezra. Although *Sefer Moznaim* had already been printed before, this may be included in the trend that Irene Zwiep calls 'literary archaeology' — 'manuscripts of medieval Sephardi classics, which until then had been hidden in private collections, were now brought to the printing press in order to be saved from oblivion.'[29]

The third of the books published by Benjamin in 1770, Elia Levita's *Pirqe Rabbi Elia*, is not Sephardic in origin like the other two. In its case, therefore, Benjamin justifies its publication more generally, by emphasizing the importance of the grammatical knowledge it contains as something of particular importance to the literary world in which he wishes to find his place. Benjamin explains the necessity of printing this text, even though *Pirqe Rabbi Elia* had already been printed in the past, by saying that 'these books are only in the hands of senior masters'.[30] The content of the book — the grammatical knowledge — is defined as indispensable: 'And the word of God is very precious, and everything is necessary, and everyone needs the owners of the wheat'.[31] Benjamin declares that although a new edition of *Sefer HaBachur*, Elia Levita's main grammatical work, was recently printed in Berlin,[32] there are grammatical topics that are not included in it but are found in *Pirqe Rabbi Elia* and therefore: 'I was compelled to reprint this book and *Sefer Yesod Mora* and the book *Ner Elohim* by the late Rabbi YaShaR of Candia to grant merit to many people'.[33]

By linking the book to *Sefer Yesod Mora* and to *Ner Elohim*, Benjamin emphasizes the importance of the grammatical knowledge and places it on the same level as understanding the commandments of the Torah (in *Sefer Yesod Mora*) and understanding the rationales behind the commandments through intellectual inquiry (as YaShaR of Candia does in *Ner Elohim*). Like these, grammatical knowledge is also 'a very precious word of God', and one to which everyone should have access. The understanding of *Sefer Moznaim*'s importance as a tool for grammatical understanding, which finds expression in his decision to print it, is also expressed in his reasons for printing the grammatical composition of Elia Levita. It seems that Benjamin received copies of the three books, which were rare at the time, and he justifies the decision to print them in new editions according to the cultural world in which he resides — that of the Western Sephardi diaspora.

YaShaR of Candia and Naphtali Hirz Wessely, whose writings Benjamin wished to print, were also in no way foreign to the members of the Western Sephardi diaspora. YaShaR lived in the Sephardi Portuguese communities

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29 Zwiep, 'Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered', pp. 291–92.

30 Levita, *Pirqe Rabbi Elia*, title page.

31 'Everyone needs the owners of the wheat' means 'everyone needs the basic knowledge'. According to Babylonian Talmud, tractate Horayot, 14a.

32 Levita, *Sefer HaBachur*.

33 Levita, *Pirqe Rabbi Elia*, title page.

of Hamburg and Amsterdam, held positions of leadership there,[34] and felt at home in the Sephardi cultural milieu.[35] His scientific essay *Sefer Elim* was printed at Menashe ben Israel's printing house in Amsterdam in 1629, and despite the reluctance of some of the community leaders to print this essay, in the heritage of Sephardic Amsterdam Jewry, the character of YaShaR was not recognized as having a negative influence in any way.[36] Wessely, too, should not be seen as culturally dissociated from the Sephardi world, in Amsterdam or elsewhere. In many respects, he felt at home in Sephardi culture and even chose to be buried in the Sephardi plot of the Jewish cemetery in Altona.[37] He spent the 1750s and 1760s in Amsterdam, where he arranged the printing of his two-volume grammatical work *Gan Na'ul* in 1765–1766. While there, he developed close relations with members of the local literary milieu, including the poet and playwright David Franco Mendes and the poet and bibliographer Isaac HaKohen Belinfante, and with them took part in a literary group that met regularly for collective study.[38] In the 1780s these connections led to the publication in the periodical *Ha-Me'assef* of a number of biographies of the greats of Sephardic Jewry, and in particular those of Amsterdam, penned by Franco Mendes and mediated by Wessely.[39]

As far as Benjamin was concerned, the manuscripts he wanted to print did not belong to different cultural spaces. Benjamin was not in the habit of collecting and printing any and all manuscripts that came his way. For him, Wessely and YaShaR were part of the Spanish cultural circle, as to a large extent Wessely saw himself and as his contemporaries saw YaShaR.[40]

It is important to note that the meeting between Benjamin and Wessely in Copenhagen was, as mentioned, between the years 1768–1770. At this stage, before the publication of his controversial book *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Words of Peace and Truth), in 1781, which raised much opposition against him among European rabbis, Wessely was not seen as a threatening or defiant

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34 Barzilay, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo*, pp. 76–78, 85. On his tombstone in the Jewish cemetery in Prague it is written: 'The head of the court in Hamburg and in the region of Amsterdam'.

35 David Ruderman defined him as having a 'Sephardic mentality'. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe*, p. 135. According to the testimony of a Danish scholar with whom he met in Frankfurt, YaShaR used to talk to his wife in Spanish. Barzilay, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo*, p. 79.

36 Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, pp. 253–54.

37 Feiner, 'From Renaissance to Revolution: The Eighteenth Century in Jewish History', p. 1.

38 Feiner, 'Early Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century Judaism', pp. 193–94 [Hebrew]; Michman, 'The Influence of German Jews on Dutch Jewry in the Nineteenth Century', pp. 249–51 [Hebrew].

39 *Ha-Me'assef*, 2 (1785), pp. 16–17, 26–27; 4 (1788), pp. 167–72, 219–23, 297–301 [Hebrew]. For more on Wessely's connections with the literary milieu of the Spanish-Portuguese community in Amsterdam see: Zwiep, 'Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered', especially p. 289.

40 In a short biography written about him in the first issue of *Ha-Me'assef*, although in the 1780s, he is described as a 'teacher of Sephardim' in Amsterdam. Keslin, 'Toldot Rabbi Yosef Mi-Candia', p. 140.

intellectual figure, but as a normative religious figure whose cultural work maintained an affinity with the spiritual world of Europe.[41] His connections with key figures in the world of Sephardic literature and culture continued, as mentioned, even after his period of residence in Amsterdam, and during his time in Copenhagen and later in Berlin, so it is not possible to separate the image of Wessely as a key figure of the Berlin Haskalah from the culture of the Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam. Such a separation would be anachronistic and patently incorrect. Benjamin's connections with Wessely must be seen in the context of his connections with the Sephardic culture and as part of these connections.[42]

'The Great City Full of Wisdom' — in Amsterdam

It was in 1772 or thereabouts that Benjamin settled in Amsterdam.[43] Once he did this, his self-image as a man of the book and the press appears to have gained in strength and permanence. In a letter to his friend Israel Gedaliah Cazes in February 1772, mentioned above, he describes having settled in this literary centre, depicting his new city of residence as a commercial hub and himself as an active player in the literary world who had already amassed experience in the book trade:

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41 Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, pp. 114–18.

42 For comparison, in his introduction to *Sefer Moznaim*, Benjamin states his hope to print a manuscript that apparently includes some of his father's and grandfather's writings and is entitled *Mamlekhet Kohanim* (Kingdom of Priests): 'God will grant me the privilege of printing the book *Mamlekhet Kohanim* by my father the Rabbi and by my grandfather the great Gaon (and this to announce that I do not come in this book to change or to detract from or to renew anything on the limits set by the famous first sages and I did not come this far but to return the crown of the Holy One to its former glory, so that we can understand the secrets of the Torah)'. Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznaim*, introduction [p. 8]. Unlike the manuscripts he brought with him from Copenhagen, Benjamin does not make a public appeal to finance the printing of this essay, perhaps because of his understanding that this essay is not part of the Western Sephardic culture and the literary interests of this culture, and therefore the prospect funding success is not high.

43 In Benjamin's letter to Israel Gedaliah Cazes from February 1772, he lists several communities he visited in northern Italy before his recent move to Amsterdam: 'Peace be within you and with all those who study with you, and especially to my beloved one with whom I stayed in the community of Padua and in the community of Venice. And I will also send my best regards to your father-in-law who is in the community of Brescello, because I had the privilege of being in his house all the High Holy Days, four years ago and now I have settled in the great city full of wisdom, whose king is Melchizedek king of Salem'. Budapest, LHAS, MS Kaufmann A 163 (Fiche 16 MSS-D 7693), p. 276. The 'great city full of wisdom' is Amsterdam. The chief rabbi of the Sephardic community in the city was Rabbi Solomon Shalem, to whom Benjamin refers as 'Melchizedek King of Shalem'. In the signature of the letter Benjamin writes: 'These are the words of the servant of the rabbis and their young students, Benjamin Me'eli, here Amsterdam, Rosh Chodesh (Head of the Month) Adar, year 5532 (1772)'.

> And now I have settled in the great city full of wisdom […] and I am ready and willing to serve you in everything and in particular if you need some books in your place of any kind of print in the world, let me know […] and if perhaps you have some books to exchange with other books it is possible to do so successfully. Because this city is a trading city and has imports and exports and with God's help, I have already made successful negotiations with several rabbis of Italy.[44]

This letter is reflective of a fundamental change in Benjamin's portrayal of himself, which corresponds to his move from Hamburg to Amsterdam. In his early days in Europe, Benjamin described himself as one who had been forced to leave Jerusalem and upon reaching Livorno was introduced to the printing world by his host, under the influence of something like divine Providence, which ushered him into this world and tasked him with editing and printing jobs. Due to his fundraising activities for the Jewish community in Tiberias and his encounters with various personalities and societies, he encountered books and manuscripts in Copenhagen and elsewhere that, he realized, should be printed due to their importance (but that was not the purpose of his fundraising journey). At this point in his career, on the other hand, he describes himself as wholly immersed in the world of the book. Amsterdam represents an advanced stage in the evolution of Benjamin's self-perception as a man of the book and the press, an entrepreneurial activist in a literary world that he had joined almost passively as part of a destiny to which he had been steered upon reaching Livorno, shortly after leaving Jerusalem. This, of course, was not an unequivocal and dichotomous shift of consciousness from total passivity to activism and enterprise. Nevertheless, the introductions that Benjamin attached to most of the works that he edited and printed before settling in Amsterdam evoke the image of a man who was selected by the book, deterministically as it were, to be an editor and printer and who was directed toward these tasks by divine Providence.[45] In contrast, the introductions of the books Benjamin printed and edited while in Amsterdam portray *him* as the one who chooses the books and decides how to deal with them.

Benjamin's literary activity in Amsterdam includes several projects that evoke the image of a person involved and active in the world of books and printing. In 1773, he edited the halakhic work *Lev Shalem* by Solomon Shalem, the chief rabbi of the Amsterdam Sephardi community, in conjunction with Isaac HaKohen Belinfante.[46] Belinfante was a central personality in the

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44 Budapest, LHAS, MS Kaufmann A 163 (Fiche 16 MSS-D 7693), p. 276.

45 An exception is *Pirqe Rabbi Elia* in which he expresses himself in a relatively active manner in the context of printing the book and says that he noticed the lack of a book of this type and 'I woke up to reprint this book […] to grant merit to many people'. Levita, *Pirqe Rabbi Elia*, title page. The attempt to finance the printing of YaShaR of Candia's and Wessely's manuscripts is also an active attempt, but it is accompanied by the emphasis that the manuscripts came to him during his mission as an emissary of the community of Tiberias.

46 On the title page, the printer notes that the book 'was carefully proofread by the experts in

Amsterdam Sephardi community; he served as librarian of the *Ets Haim* study hall,[47] writing and collecting poetry into anthologies of literary works.[48] Benjamin's collaboration with this figure attests to his having become integrated into the literary world of the local community. Another work that Benjamin edited together with Isaac Belinfante in Amsterdam is the *Tefilat Yesharim* prayerbook, published in 1779. As implied by Benjamin's introduction, the prayerbook was brought to print with the funding of Masoud de la Mar — the Moroccan envoy in Holland and the son of a Moroccan Jewish family who leased the position of port customs collector from the Sultan.[49] Benjamin describes how Masoud approached him with an offer to finance the publication of the book:

> The voice of a respectable, precious man, educated and wise man, Rabbi Masoud de la Mar, may God preserve him [...] He said to me, I have prepared money for those who do the work. Each man according to his work for all works. And you, gird your loins like a man,[50] to publish this prayerbook which is ten times better than the previous prayerbooks.[51]

Immediately afterwards, Benjamin describes how he agreed to this offer and vigorously prepared to proofread the prayerbook: 'That's why I stretched my arms to prepare it like a fixed peg'.[52]

According to his introduction and the testimony of his collaborator, Isaac Belinfante, it was Benjamin who initiated the collaboration and was the active player in the editing work at this stage of his career in the book industry in Amsterdam. If in the book *Lev Shalem* the pair of proofreaders — Isaac Belinfante and Benjamin — appear as equal in their work and Isaac Belinfante's name appears before Benjamin's, then in *Tefilat Yesharim* Benjamin, who at

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proofreading, the Sons of Aaron Ha-Kohanim, students of the Rabbi, the author may God preserve him, Isaac son of the Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen Belinfante and Benjamin son of the Rabbi Hayyim Shalom Me'eli HaKohen'.

47 On the *Ets Haim* study hall see: Sclar, 'Books in the Ets Haim Yeshivah'.

48 An example of his literary work is a manuscript collection of poems titled *Segulat Melachim* (The Virtue of Kings) which he compiled and edited, and which was defined on the title page as a book 'in which are poems like gemstones, and they serve as lights, by the greatest poets of all generations'. The 133-page file includes poems by key figures in the Sephardic community of Amsterdam such as Solomon de Oliveira, Moshe Raphael de Aguilar and others, alongside classical Sephardic Hebrew poets from the Middle Ages such as Abraham ibn Ezra, Solomon ibn Gabirol and Solomon Bonfed. Amsterdam, EH47 C 30–31. On Isaac Belinfante see Belinfante, 'The Recuperative Power of the Pen'; Malachi, 'Pi Ha-Medabber' [Hebrew].

49 Schroeter, *The Sultan's Jew*, pp. 15–35; Stillman, 'The Jewish Courtier Class in Late Eighteenth-Century Morocco'.

50 According to Job 38. 3: 'Gird your loins like a man; I will ask and you will inform Me'.

51 *Tefilat Yesharim*, [p. 3].

52 *Tefilat Yesharim*, [p. 3] 'Like a fixed peg' according to Isaiah 22. 25: 'In that day — declares the LORD of Hosts — the peg fixed in a firm place shall give way'.

that time was already a member of the local Sephardic study hall, *Ets Haim*,[53] is depicted as the dominant figure, who initiates the cooperation between the proofreaders. This time, it is Benjamin who appears on the cover of the book as the first of the two proofreaders, and in his introduction, he describes how the collaboration arose in his mind: 'If I am for my own self only, what am I?[54] How should I do all this work, the work of Heaven? So I said in my heart: Two are better off than one, a fellowship of priests (Kohanim),[55] one priest, supports another'.[56]

Benjamin's initiative is also reflected in the introduction of his partner, Isaac Belinfante:

> My eyes behold every precious thing,[57] the work of a master's hand, a Benjaminite.[58] Known by his name in his actions and in his place [...] This is Benjamin Beloved of God,[59] and he is a priest of God most high.[60] A man of clear thought. My dear friend, a man I like, who awakened my spirit and embraced my strength to engage with him in the work of heaven. So I said, I am a friend to all God-fearing people.[61]

Benjamin's virtues, and his value as a man of books and printing, derive from his name, that is, his family lineage, and his descent from a rabbinic family whose sons were engaged in printing. They also derive from his actions, that is, from his proven experience, at this stage of his career, in proofreading and

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53 This is how he concludes his introduction: 'I live among my own people, I am sitting in the tent of Torah in the Great study hall of the Sephardim community here in Amsterdam'. *Tefilat Yesharim*, [p. 3]. This is the first time that Benjamin associates himself with this study hall, so apparently, he joined the *Ets Haim* study hall after 1775 when he signs his introduction to the book *Lev Shelem* without mentioning his affiliation to the *Ets Haim* study hall. Also in *Sefer Ha-Mevakesh* (The Book of the Searcher) that he proofread and printed in The Hague in 1778, his name appears, on the title page and in the approbations, without affiliation to *Ets Haim*, but this work was not accompanied by an introduction by Benjamin, so he did not sign it himself.

54 According to Mishnah tractate Avot 1. 14: 'If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self only, what am I? And if not now, when?'.

55 According to Hosea 6. 9: 'The bands of priests is like the ambuscade of bandits who murder on the road to Shechem, for they have encouraged depravity'.

56 *Tefilat Yesharim*, [p. 3].

57 According to Job 28. 10: 'He carves out channels through rock, his eyes behold every precious thing'.

58 According to Esther 2. 5: 'In the fortress Shushan lived a Jew by the name of Mordecai, son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, a Benjaminite'.

59 According to Genesis 33. 12: 'Of Benjamin he said: Beloved of God, He rests securely beside God who protects him always, as he rests between God's shoulders'.

60 According to Genesis 14. 18: 'And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High'.

61 *Tefilat Yesharim*, [pp. 2–4]. Benjamin's centrality in the work of proofreading the prayerbook also emerges from the fact that in the approbations for the prayerbook, written by the rabbis of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities in Amsterdam, only Benjamin is mentioned as the proofreader.

editing. Finally, they derive from his place, that is, from his being a person who came from the Land of Israel — a fact that gives him prestige even at this stage of his life, when he had already lived in Europe for about a decade and a half and was known in the Western Sephardic diaspora for his literary work.

In the middle, between the two proofreading works upon which he collaborated with Isaac Belinfante, we find Benjamin proofreading in 1775 the halachic book *Nehar Shalom* (a river of peace) by Rabbi Shabbati Ventura.[62] Once again, and unlike the introductions to the books he worked on in the earlier stages of his career, which present him as a passive character, as one who is led to the craft or falls into it, in his appendix to this book he presents himself as an active taker of initiative: 'And I will proclaim in a loud voice saying: Taste and see that the trade is profitable.[63] Then I said, I will bring a scroll recounting,[64] to read it in order to proofread as far as I can'.[65]

If we view Benjamin's settling in Amsterdam as the onset of a new phase in his integration into the literary world, a stage of transition from passivity to activism and from a deterministic outlook on his place in this milieu to a more entrepreneurial and independent approach, then it seems that 1783 may mark the completion of the movement. In that year, Benjamin arranged the publication of four short essays by a hero of the Amsterdam community's recent past, R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (*Ramhal*) — *Derech Chochma* (Path of Wisdom), *Ma'amar al Ha-Haggdot* (Essay on the Haggadot), *Ma'amar al Ha-Chochma* (essay on the wisdom), *Ma'amar Ha-Ikkarim al Ha-Nevuah Ve-Al Ha-Hashgachah* (essay on principles of prophecy and providence).[66] Benjamin printed these four manuscripts bound together in one book, with each essay opening on its own title page. Benjamin's introduction to this book, along with the approbations attached to it, shed light on Benjamin's self-perception at this stage and his image as seen by members of the

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62 On Ventura see: Rosanes, *A History of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 345. [Hebrew].

63 According to Proverbs 31. 18: 'She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night'.

64 According to Psalm 40. 8: 'Then I said, See, I will bring a scroll recounting what befell me'.

65 Ventura, *Nehar Shalom*, p. 202[b]. Another book that Benjamin proofread during this period is the medieval philosophical treatise *Sefer haMevaqesh* (The Book of the Searcher) by Rabbi Shemtov ibn Falaquera from thirteenth-century Spain. The proofreading and printing of this essay in The Hague by Mordechai Tama — a resident of Hebron who went to Amsterdam in the early 1760s and finally settled in Bordeaux — can be seen as another example of literary archaeology, but the dominant figure in this printing is that of Mordechai Tama who, according to his words on the cover of the book, turned to Benjamin with a request that he proofread it before printing. It seems that at this stage Benjamin was already well known in the Jewish-Spanish society in the Netherlands as a professional proofreader. On Mordechai Tama and his work in Western Europe see: Cohen, 'Eager to Belong: A Palestinian Jew in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam'; Cohen, 'Living and Writing in Two Voices: The Integration of a Jew from the Land of Israel in Western Europe in the Eighteenth Century' [Hebrew].

66 These thematic essays range in length from six to eighteen pages. On these essays see Sclar, 'The Rise of the "Ramhal"', p. 147.

community into which he had firmly planted himself. Benjamin introduces the manuscripts and describes how he had found them in the home of his friend, David Franco Mendes of Amsterdam, who was Ramhal's student.[67] After announcing the discovery of the lost manuscripts, he explains how, realizing their importance, he felt it his duty to have them printed. Benjamin's active and enterprising approach stands out in this account: 'I found this hidden light in the house of the learned master, the great wise man Rabbi David Franco Mendes. And when I opened the gates of wisdom, I saw the light that should shine to all of Israel […] So I said it was my duty to grant merit to Israel and print these essays'.[68] Immediately afterward, he even confidently declares his intention of publishing three additional works by the same author.[69]

The material choice to print the four articles as one book and not as four thin booklets is also indicative of a certain self-perception. As far as Benjamin is concerned, he is printing a corpus of Ramhal's unknown works and not four short booklets, and as such he positions himself as the printer of a significant corpus. The transition from four separate and short manuscripts to a printed corpus of Ramhal's hitherto unknown and unpublished writings gives the sacred text prestige and importance and creates, through the material choice, a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Moreover, it seems that Benjamin sees the current corpus as the first volume in the printing of Ramhal's essays that had not yet been printed, since he refers in his introduction to the seven essays (the four that are printed and the three that are to be printed) as one body. Referring to the seven essays in his introduction, Benjamin declares that 'The ways are seven, these are the heads of the family of Benjamin. And as for the end, the sum of the matter of everything will give wisdom, out in the open wisdom calls aloud'.[70] Benjamin paraphrases the verse 'These are the heads of their families' (Exodus 6. 14), a verse that opens the counting of the Israelites in Egypt, and thereby associates Ramhal's essays with himself — he is the one who prints them and therefore he is, as it were, the one who begets them and brings them into the world. The name of Benjamin in this paragraph appears in bold letters and emphasizes, also visually, his central place in the dissemination of the wisdom of Ramhal through the printing of the corpus that includes his essays.

Benjamin's confident image of himself as a person who has joined and immersed himself in the world of the book and the local press corresponds with the way Benjamin's neighbours and colleagues view him. David Franco Mendes states in his introduction to the Ramhal book:

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67 Melkman, *David Franco Mendes*, pp. 30–37.
68 Ramhal, *Derech Chochma*, Introduction [p. 8].
69 Ramhal, *Derech Chochma*, Introduction [p. 8].
70 Ramhal, *Derech Chochma*, Introduction [p. 7].

> Meritorious things are brought about through the agency of good men, a man filled with the spirit of wisdom to make every work of art […] the complete sage Rabbi Benjamin Me'eli HaKohen. When I showed him the manuscripts that I have in my treasury, including these seven books, his soul longed for them, and he asked my permission to put them on the altar of printing. And even though I kept them to myself until today, I cancelled my will because of his will because it is not fair to refuse with a good and honest man like him.[71]

David Franco Mendes's description paints Benjamin as an enterprising and active man who asked, and perhaps even urged, the owner of the manuscripts to allow him to bring them to print. This perception is also reflected in the approbations for the book. Rabbi David HaKohen de Ezevedo, who replaced Rabbi Solomon Shalem as the chief rabbi of the Sephardic community in Amsterdam,[72] describes Benjamin as follows: 'And these books were hidden from view and forgotten until one of us, of our group, searched and found them, the writer of writers — the complete sage Rabbi Benjamin Me'eli HaKohen.'[73] Both the introduction and the approbations describe Benjamin as someone who has extricated a local hero's oeuvre from darkness[74] — a member of the community and a senior participant in its literary milieu.

In Conclusion — The Wandering Jew finds his Place in the World

In the nearly twenty years that passed between Benjamin's departure from Jerusalem and his arrival in Livorno in 1764 to the printing of the Ramhal books in Amsterdam, this 'wandering Jew' underwent a process of mental change, one that was closely entangled with the activity of printing and proofreading. During these years, in which he worked in various Hebrew printing centres, he served as an agent of knowledge whose self-image and perception of his place in the Jewish book world of Europe evolved. The man who had made his way from the Land of Israel to Italy, wandered through Copenhagen and northern Germany until settling in Amsterdam, became acquainted with the literary world and the printing industry in the course of these migrations. At first, he participated in a quasi-deterministic way as a passive player until he became a member of the in-group — a publishing

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71 Ramhal, *Derech Chochma*, Introduction [p. 9].

72 Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts*, p. 18.

73 Ramhal, *Derech Chochma*, [p. 2].

74 Rabbi Shaul of Amsterdam also writes similar things with his approbation. Ramhal, *Derech Chochma*, [p. 4]. *Ramhal*'s time in Amsterdam was a calm period, after the Scandals associated with him. He was welcomed by members of the Spanish-Portuguese community, connected with many influential people in the community and restored his image and the way he was perceived in the Jewish world. See Sclar, 'The Rise of the "Ramhal"', pp. 139–53.

entrepreneur who raised the local legacy from oblivion and a senior member of the Republic of Letters.

The shift was accomplished. Indeed, already thirteen years earlier, in Altona, Benjamin had brought the Sephardic wisdom to print in the form of ibn Ezra's essays, had sought to contribute grammatical knowledge to the literary world by printing the book of Elia Levita, and had tried to raise funds for the printing of the works of past and present figures from Amsterdam and Western Europe such as YaShaR of Candia and Naphtali Hirz Wessely. But these actions were, for the most part, at least according to Benjamin's perception, actions he fell into as part of his destiny. And they were, for the most part, incidental to his mission as an emissary. When Benjamin settled in Amsterdam, his character became consolidated. No longer a wandering man whose fate brings him together with books that supposedly choose him, he is now a definite literary figure who chooses the world of books and printing and is aware of its material significance, as befits a resident of the city of Amsterdam socializing with members of its literary milieu. While Benjamin aimed to modify the form and scope of manuscripts by bringing them into print, his deep engagement with books not only shaped his self-image but also resulted in this very image to be textually, visually, and materially inscribed within the printed books themselves.

ABSTRACT The article seeks to trace the experiences of an eighteenth-century Jew named Benjamin Me'eli HaKohen, who embarked on a journey from his home in Jerusalem to Western and Northern Europe. The focus is on the gradual shaping of his identity and self-image during his years in Europe as a book publisher. This is accomplished through an examination of Benjamin's encounters with manuscripts he discovered in various places and subsequently travelled with in order to publish them. By understanding his perception of these books, including his material perception of the manuscripts during different periods of his wanderings, we can gain insights into the changes that occurred in the image of Benjamin HaKohen throughout his travels as an itinerant publisher.

KEYWORDS Benjamin Me'eli HaKohen; Hebrew Printing; Manuscripts; Literary Milieu; Western Sephardic Diaspora; Self-image

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TÜLAY ARTAN

Dazzling Objects and Ottoman Enthusiasts

Travelling Luxuries Across the Mediterranean and Beyond

Introduction

The idea and practice of luxury has a long history, but the history of luxury is a very recent genre. Furthermore, the recent interdisciplinary literature on the history of rare, curious, and precious objects frames luxury as taking off only from the early eighteenth century.[1] Claiming to break from the earlier and better studied field of consumer culture, this literature addresses the question of post-1700 luxury from a variety of perspectives, but has largely omitted non-Western societies and cultures. This is a little ironic, for the West has long been fascinated with exotic splendours and the Ottoman world was long the primary muse for European fantasies.[2] In time, the curiosity of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries was replaced by a fascination with the exoticism of the further East, giving rise to the Chinoiserie, *Japonnairie*, dell'Indie, and Turquerie fashions of the eighteenth century.[3]

1 Tülay Artan, 'Objects of Consumption'. Berg and Eger referred to the 1711 critical pamphlet of John Dennis, *An Essay upon Publick Spirit; being a Satyr in Prose upon the Manners and Luxury of the Times*, which paints London as bursting with luxury goods, as an early example of hundreds of political and satirical works that displays a fascination with luxury. They also provided a survey of the divergent strands of eighteenth-century political, moral, philosophical and economic arguments about luxury in their joint chapter in the same volume: Berg and Eger, 'Introduction', and 'The Rise and Fall of Luxury Debates'. See also Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*.

2 The English ambassador Sir John Finch (d. 1682) wrote, 'If you want wealth, go to India. If you want learning, go to Europe. But if you want imperial splendour, come to the Ottoman Empire': Mansel, *Sultans in Splendour*, p. 12.

3 Focusing on the inventories of the gifts and palaces of Medici Grand Dukes Cosimo (1519–1574), Francesco (1541–1587) and Ferdinando I (1549–1609), Emperors Rudolph II

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In modern scholarship and curatorship, Ottoman acquisitions of rarities, curiosities, or simply the precious have continued to attract interest mainly over the sheer volume of what is (or was) held in the imperial treasury and palace.[4] Thus imperial regalia such as turbans and aigrettes, plus daggers and belts, rings and earrings — together with Ottoman artists' jewelled horse-trappings, arms, and armour; tents, carpets, and spreads; incense burners, rose-water sprinklers and water canteens; candle-holders, fans, and fly-whisks; rock-crystals, porcelains and celadons; bookbindings, illuminated and illustrated manuscripts — as well as the windfall from domestic confiscations or expropriations, diplomatic gifts and spoils of war, were all amassed in the sultan's treasury and became synonymous with Ottoman opulence or luxury.[5]

Some of the objects of foreign origin were made according to Ottoman tastes or traditions, or re-embellished and repurposed after arrival. This was also the case for the Yuan and Ming-ware made for pre-Ottoman Islamic courts and amassed by the Ottomans. Large bowls and plates, suitable for the Middle Eastern tradition of eating from a single container at the table, were specially produced for the Umayyad and Abbasid palaces. Porcelain and celadon pitchers and flasks were either modelled on copper or brass drinking vessels from the Islamic lands, or bottles were reshaped. In the years to come, while Ottoman artists repaired and replaced missing lids, spouts, or handles with pieces made of gold, gilded silver, and brass, they applied ornaments using precious stones to enhance small blue-and-whites and celadons they had looted or received as gifts, giving rise to a new art form in the sixteenth century. Some cracks and easily breakable parts of porcelain pieces were also restored using decorative elements. A huge vase turned into a censer is a unique example of such repurposing. A study of Chinese porcelain in

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(1552–1611), Matthias I (1557–1619), and Empress Maria Theresa (1717–1780), Keating and Markey remarked that 'Indian' (*Indien*, Indiana, alla Indiana, *Indianische*) connoted objects not only came from the Americas and India, but also Africa, China, Japan, the Levant, and even Europe: 'The fact that "Indian" defined terms as diverse as Mexican featherwork, Sinhalese mother-of-pearl chests, African weapons, Hebrew manuscripts, Mughal miniatures, and Chinese porcelain highlights both the problems in relying on inventories for identifying objects and also the complexities of this early modern term'. See Keating and Markey, '"Indian" objects in Medici and Austrian-Habsburg Inventories'. For 'exotica such as Persian or Turkish clothing, textiles, and arms, Brazilian featherwork, birds of paradise, lacquerware, products carved of ivory, lustrous shells, tulips, porcelain, bezoar stones, coconuts and other compelling, rare, and costly items brought from the East Indies, Central Asia and the Levant, and the New World', and on the use of adjective 'Indian': Swan, 'Lost in Translation: Exoticism in Early Modern Holland'.

4 'Luxury is a *sine qua non* of any palace, and so it was also in Byzantium, in good Late-Antique Roman tradition […] The Palace and everything in it was sacred. As one source proclaimed, it imitated Heaven. Luxury is implicit […] However, luxury in an earthly palace is a complicated thing': Featherstone, 'Luxury in the Palace', p. 33.

5 Rogers, 'Ottoman Luxury Trades and Their Regulation'; Reindl-Kiel, 'East is East and West is West, and Sometimes the Twain Did Meet'; Casale, 'Iconography of the Gift'; Talbot, *British-Ottoman Relations*.

the Topkapı Palace collection shows that the number of pieces with later ornamental additions is higher than that of the restored pieces, indicating a desire for luxury. Likewise, rock-crystals, Fatimid or Burgundian, treasured at the European courts and gifted to the Ottomans together with later European products, were equally prized as rarities, if not as antiques, and were restored, decorated in the Ottoman style with gold and emeralds, rubies, turquoises, and reused.

At the same time, there were other dimensions to what the Ottomans sought and possessed than just the contents of the Inner Treasury at the Imperial Palace. A letter from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the wife of the English ambassador to Istanbul in 1716–1718, to Abbé (Antonio Schinella) Conti provides a rare insight into the mystical or metaphysical side of the Ottoman elite's attitude to collecting:

> I have bespoken a mummy which I hope will come safe to my hands, notwithstanding the misfortune which befell a very fine one destined for the King of Sweden. He gave a good price for it, and the Turks took it into their heads that he must certainly have some considerable project depending upon it. They fancied it the body of God knows who, and that the fate of the Empire mystically depended upon the conservation of it. Some old prophecies were remembered upon this occasion, and the mummy committed prisoner to the Seven Towers, where it has remained in close confinement ever since.[6]

Numerous relics and antiquities kept in the Imperial Palace and elsewhere also suggest that Ottoman luxury was much more than solid, material excess or superfluity. Thus many objects were claimed as precious not only because of their physical but also conceptual worth. Just a few cases in point are: marbles transported as booty all the way from Cairo and deposited in the Marble Treasury of the Topkapı Palace (1527–1529), or arms and armour stored and displayed at Hagia Irene, or ancestral costumes and horse-trappings kept at Çömlek Kasrı in Edirne and worn during stately campaign departure ceremonies.[7]

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6 Wortley Montagu, *The Letters and Works*, I, p. 270. Abbé Conti who had a lasting friendship with her was a Paduan intellectual who enjoyed the friendship and patronage of some of the foremost women intellectuals in Venice, Paris, and London and became the recipient of her *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1717–1718). He is identified as a free-thinking pillar of the Age of Enlightenment; however, it is argued that Conti could not entirely free himself from all the prejudices of his times. He was at the same time advancing pseudo-scientific arguments to demonstrate not simply women's physical but also their mental inferiority: Messbarger, 'The Very Fibre of Their Being'.

7 Öngen and Vardar, 'Gebze Mustafa Paşa Külliyesi'. For 'Mecmâ-i *Eslihâ*-i Atîka ve Mecmâ-i *âsâr-i* Atîka' at Hagia Irene: Ar, 'Aya İrini'de Dâr-ül Esliha Düzenlemesi'; Köç, 'Askeri Müze'nin Kuruluş Hikayesi'; Öz, 'Ahmet Fethi Paşa ve Müzeler'; See also: Osman Sermed Muhtar Alus, *Müze-i Askerî-i Osmanî*. Evliyâ Çelebi noted that at the Çömlek Kasr in Edirne robes of honour, saddles, and girths of Murad I, Bayezid I and Murad II were stored. '[…]

These initial observations may go some way towards explaining why I think that exploring the Ottomans' approach to (or understanding of) luxury is long overdue.[8] Luxury products are invested with certain worldly values, and (depending on time and place) may even acquire a sacred character. Hence they are a crucial cultural indicator. A historical analysis should question whether the Ottoman idea of luxury was nothing more than a manifestation of prosperity and splendour, built on an unchanging sense of exclusivity and power. Did (changes in) access to material goods always affect only a small section of the ruling elite? Or, conversely, did the social changes unleashed by the demand for luxury (including variation) have a broader impact, leading to the modification of concepts of time, space, society, the state, the family, and the individual?[9]

What is Luxury?

Some thirty years ago Arjun Appadurai, a social and cultural anthropologist who became a leading theorist in globalization studies, proposed to regard luxury as a special class of things having some or all of the following attributes: restriction, either by price or by law, to elites; complexity of acquisition, which may or may not be a function of real scarcity; semiotic virtuosity, that is, the capacity to signal fairly complex social messages; specialized knowledge as a prerequisite for their 'appropriate' consumption, that is, regulation by fashion; and a high degree of linkage of their consumption to body, person, and personality.[10] More recently, following historical explorations of the early modern material world and conspicuous consumption, Giorgio Riello has questioned what luxury means and what a luxury product was in early modern global markets, offering a 'typology of luxury' and discussing what he calls absolute or relative, and positional, ceremonial, or aspirational luxuries — terms that suggest a functional classification based on what these objects are (were) used for.[11]

Gâzî Hüdavendigâr'ın ve Yıldırım Hân ve Murâd Hân'ın hil'atları ve eğerleri ve yanları vardır [...]': Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, p. 172. See also Artan, 'The Departure Procession of 1672'.

8 An exception is Reindl-Kiel's multiple studies on the luxury assets of the Ottoman ruling elite: Reindl-Kiel, 'Solomon's Unicorn'; 'Status, Honour and Luxuries: Some Remarks on Material Exchange between Russia and the Ottoman Empire'; 'Diamonds are a Vizier's Best Fiends'; 'The Must-Haves of a Grand Vizier'.

9 Artan, 'Objects of Consumption'.

10 Appadurai, 'Introduction'.

11 Riello, 'Luxury or Commodity?', esp. table 2, 'Typology of Luxury'. He identified a great deal of the rarities and preciosities of the early modern world as belonging to the category of 'absolute luxuries' and their inspired imitations, counterfeits, and copies as 'relative luxuries', and went on to make a functional classification based on what luxury was used for — positional luxuries to mark social hierarchy, ceremonial luxuries to mark special

Such modern taxonomies aside, from earliest times the Western concept of luxury has been associated with other places and cultures. Historians have explored long-distance trade; archaeologists and anthropologists have explored the connection between luxuries and foreign goods (and their traders) in early and ancient societies. Trade with Asia, via the Silk Routes running through Inner Asia, Indian Ocean ports, and the Persian Gulf, was continuous throughout the Roman Empire, familiarizing Rome and Constantinople with 'Asiatic' luxuries. 'Foreignness' was embodied in Eastern rare and precious manufactured goods — silks, cottons, especially muslins, printed calicoes and chintzes, mirrors, ornamental brass and ironware, lacquer, paper and paper goods, and porcelains.[12] Later still, corresponding to the waning of the Ming dynasty in China, the period from around 1580 to the 1640s was a time of creative energy that produced outstanding works of art and literature, amazing paintings in scrolls and on folding screens, fine blue and white porcelain, exquisite lacquers, ritual and commemorative bronzes, jade ornaments, embroidered silks of exceptional beauty.[13]

The few studies on the inventories of Ottoman upper-class men and women reveal that nearly all objects of luxury and status are from the East, and also shows that the Ottoman concept of luxury, too, was associated with other places and cultures.[14] Istanbul, strategically located at the junction of two continents, continued to benefit from this Asian trade. The Ottoman centre had access to 'things' travelling from China to Samarkand to Isfahan to Damascus, or from India to Hijaz to Damascus and Cairo. Eventually, it also had access to novelties from the new Atlantic Ocean trade via European markets and Mediterranean ports. The craze for 'foreign' things was further

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occasions/traditions and aspirational luxuries to express social mobility — as well as value, type, context, and social functioning.

12 Riello, 'Luxury or Commodity?' Riello argued that Indian cotton textiles included not just cheap, easily accessible varieties but also a range of luxury products. He proposed a different definition of luxury for the Indian cotton textiles which, unlike precious and expensive Chinese silks, were marketed in three different regions of the early modern world.

13 On the significance of this Chinese and Japanese consumer culture, and a sophisticated intra-Asian trade in luxury goods, see Willis, 'European Consumption and Asian Production'; Burke, 'Rex et verba'. On the luxury debates in China and Japan: Clunas, 'Anxieties about Things', and 'Luxury Knowledge: The Xiushilu ("Records of Lacquering") of 1625'. Berg, 'Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution'.

14 Artan, 'Objects of Consumption'. We have a few estate records of members of the Ottoman court from before the seventeenth century, and almost no studies on them. From luxury manuscripts to Chinese porcelain, we know the accumulated wealth and valuables of Ottoman royal ladies and deceased or disgraced notables to have routinely reverted to the sultan (if not converted immediately into cash). Raby and Yücel have provided a partial list of the sixteenth-century post-mortem inventories of royal ladies and state functionaries. At a first glance, they have listed only jewellery — items that were commonly recycled or redistributed, and which therefore cannot be traced in the archives or in museums. Raby and Yücel, 'Chinese Porcelain at the Ottoman Court'; Artan, 'Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Princesses as Collectors'.

boosted through the exotica of the New World, the East Indies, the Baltic and Africa, including their flora and fauna as well as raw materials, including gems.[15] In particular, it is the precious stones discovered by the Spanish during the conquest of South America which found a novel place at the Ottoman palace. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a flood of magnificent emeralds came from Colombian mines via Spain and India. 'Diamond-loving Europeans were at first not very fond of emeralds', says gemmologist Fred Ward, 'which is one reason why the Ottomans […] ended up with so many monstrous stones'.[16] The four emeralds decorating the Topkapı dagger (*c.* 1746) are examples of such stones while the origins of pearls, feathers of birds of paradise, bezoar stones, or cochineal dye-coloured textiles and carpets in the palace collections are yet to be identified. The cochineal insect (*Dactylopius coccus*), whose pulverized body provided a deep, intense carmine colour, was originally from the valleys of Oaxaca in central Mexico, and it was one of the most expensive and coveted sources of red in the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds.[17] Ottoman sultans' kaftans as well as the robes of Roman Catholic cardinals were saturated in this luxurious dye, and some of Europe's most famous painters, from Tintoretto to Titian, used cochineal to signal the dignity and opulence of their sitters. The colour red was the definition of luxury.[18]

Deriving from the Latin, the term 'luxury' has two classical roots: *luxus* meaning sensuality, splendour or pomp, and *luxuria* meaning riot, excess or extravagance. Luxury was desirable, but it was also a source of anxiety.[19]

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15 Grewe and Hofmeester, eds, *Luxury in Global Perspective*; Lemire, *Global Trade and the Transformation of Consumer Cultures*; Thurner and Pimentel, eds, *New World Objects of Knowledge*.

16 For the paths of Colombian emeralds, a gem that merchants traded in very small quantities from the north Andean mines of Muzo and Chivor to the courts of the Mughals, Safavids, and Ottomans, as well as the courts and gem bourses of Europe, linked by multi-ethnic trading clans and other globe-trotting go-betweens between 1540 and the 1790s: Lane, *Colour of Paradise*.

17 Achim, *Cochineal*.

18 The alternative was madder red, an ancient dyestuff extracted from the root of the madder plant (*Rubia tinctorum*), growing in many places around the world. The lustrous colour was known as Turkey Red/*rouge Turc*, *rouge d'Andrinople* or Indian Red, and the complex dyeing process to obtain it was long sought in Europe. It was finally cracked by the French about 1760, who were able to dye wool, silk, and cotton bright red. See: Jacqué, ed., *Andrinople, Le Rouge Magnifique*; Chenciner, *Madder Red*. See also: Lowengard, *The Creation of Color*. A number of researchers and research teams are currently busy with identifying dyes applied to Ottoman textiles and carpets.

19 Ballaster, 'Performing *Roxane*'; Roux and Floch, 'Gérer l'ingérable'. In English, the meaning of 'luxury' evolved from 'sexual intercourse' (*c.* 1300), 'lasciviousness, sinful self-indulgence' (mid-fourteenth century), 'sensual pleasure' (late fourteenth century) to 'habit of indulgence in what is choice or costly' (1630s), 'sumptuous surroundings' (1704), 'something choice or comfortable beyond life's necessities' (1780). Likewise, in Old French, '*luxurie*' meant 'debauchery, dissoluteness, lust' (Modern French *luxure*). Both in English and in French, luxury started with the physical and drifted to the material, but pleasures of the senses were always at the root of how we understand this word today. Roux and Floch noted that 'luxus' in Latin (both adjective and noun) is originally a term derived from agricultural

Ethical worries and fears over luxury extended from the ancient to the modern world, and were central to moral and economic debates across cultures.[20] It has been argued that luxury was integral to emerging definitions of state and civic power in sixteenth-century Europe. As against *modestia*, opposite concepts of *liberalità*, *munificencia*, and *magnificencia* have been associated with Italian Renaissance lifestyles.[21] Unsurprisingly, in the 1990s, the organizers of numerous Topkapı Palace exhibitions in the West resorted to virtually the same terms of treasures, splendours or magnificence (*iḥtişām*) in order to arouse public interest.[22] The treasury objects put on display included imperial

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vocabulary. According to Jacquline Picoche's *Dictionnaire etymologique du français* 'luxury', initially 'the act of pushing askew', and then 'pushing excessively', came to define 'excess in general' and from the eighteenth century onwards had the modern meaning of 'luxury'. Derived also from 'luxus', the term 'luxuria' meant 'exuberance, profusion, luxury' or even 'voluptuous life'. It is this derivative that gave birth, in the eighteenth century, to the French word 'luxure', that is to say, 'lust'. Roux and Floch claimed that it is on the idea of decadence that the *Encyclopædia Universalis* entry on 'luxury' (Martinon, 'Sociologie du luxe') begins with a reference to the *Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues* de Flaubert, which defines luxury as what 'perd les Etats', that luxury would be the corrupting agent of virtuous cities. On the other hand, we are told that the word 'luxury' appeared in French dictionaries in 1606. In 1607 and in 1661: 'a way of life made concrete by great expenditure, to show elegance and refinement' (quoted by Perrot, 'De l'apparat au bien-être' and by Burnel, 'La filière luxe'). Here its definition is axiologically neutral — that is to say, it presents luxury as a way of life, as a way of being as much as of appearing. It is therefore only later that this term, which is then linked to elegance and refinement, takes on the meaning of ostentatious consumption: Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Veblen identified conspicuous leisure as devoting oneself to the pleasures of life such as entertaining, dining, the fine arts, and philosophy. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary adds that 'the French word *luxe* developed the meanings that we commonly associate with *luxury*: "wealth" and "indulgence". The French phase *de luxe*, meaning "of luxury", became the English word *deluxe*'. It is also added that 'by contrast, *luxure* referred to unrestrained sexual pursuits and became a synonym of *lasciviousness* or *wantonness* and is associated with words like *debauchery* and *perversity*'. As an example of how *luxury* was initially used in English, *The Oxford English Dictionary* refers to Chaucer's 'O foule lust of luxurie'. We are told that over time '*luxury* drifted away from its exclusively sensual meaning to mean "sumptuous environment", referring to food, clothes, and opulent lifestyle, as in the phrase "they lived in luxury". This association with opulence and wealth led to the word's most recent meaning, the one that refers to something nonessential or indulgent — something extra that is a welcome change that is not always possible or available, as in "going out to dinner was a rare luxury for them"'.

20 Based on a fear of financial ruin in the West, from Pliny onwards arguments were made against eastern luxuries such as amber, ivory, incense, pepper, and silk were the priorities of Roman trade. See Berg and Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates'; Kovesi, ed., *Luxury and the Ethics of Greed in Early Modern Italy*.

21 For a discussion of the development of these concepts: Berg and Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates', p. 24 n. 2: Guerzoni, 'Liberalitas, Magnificentia, Splendor'.

22 *The Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*, the National Gallery, Washington (25 January–17 May 1987; British Museum, London (18 February–30 May 1988); The Splendour of the Turkish Civilization (Tokyo-Osaka-Fukuoka-Shimonoseki, 23 August 1988–23 April 1989); *The Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*, Art Gallery of the New South Wales (27 June–26 August 1990), National Gallery of Victoria (7 September–25 November, 1990); *Splendors of the Ottoman*

regalia; clothes and accoutrements; tableware and cloths; horse-trappings, arms, and armour; illustrated and illuminated manuscripts and writing equipment. Featured substances were gold and silver, gems and rock-crystals, pearls and corals, textiles and furs, porcelain and celadons, hardwoods, ivory and bones, glass or mirrors. They were chosen as bearing witness to luxuries in motion. But meanwhile, perishable luxuries such as sugar, spices, or rice received no mention in these museum exhibits. Nor are they generally recognized as luxuries.[23] In terms of daily consumption, coffee-serving and bathing paraphernalia have been virtually the only exceptions.[24]

New Luxury, 'Le superflu, chose très nécessaire': A Temporal Turn

The idea of luxury has been changing over time. A turning point in the luxury debates came in the context of the unprecedented expansion of wealth during the Dutch Golden Age, roughly over 1588–1672. This was simultaneously a time when consumer society took off, and when a critique of 'old luxury' developed into an endorsement of 'new luxury'.[25] Cabinets of wonder (*Wunderkammer*, *Kunstkammer* or *Kunstkabinette*), often small rooms, became fashionable among the royalty and nobility of Europe during the seventeenth century, and

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Sultans, Memphis Cook Convention Center (15 April–16 August 1992); The Treasures of the Ottoman Art (Galerija Klovićevi Dvori, Zagreb, 14 October–30 November 1999); *Palace of Gold & Light: Treasures from the Topkapi, Istanbul*, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (1 March–15 June 2000), the San Diego Museum of Art (14 July–24 September) and the Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale (15 October 2000–28 February 2001). Magnificence, pomp and display (*iḥtişām*) are expressed through several Ottoman terms, originating from Arabic or Persian, whereas excess, extreme, extravagance, indulgence, frill, refinement, referring to an expensive item that is not necessary and used for pleasure, was stated as *'ifrāṭ* and *'isrāf* (also connoting profusion, profligacy, excess, squandering, prodigality). Words for luxury in Arabic, referring to things ranging from those that give you a lot of pleasure, to those which you cannot often have, or something that you like having but do not need, are even more complicated, and are expressed as sumptuousness, opulence, luxe, affluence, richness, prosperity, well-being, comfort, or luxurious. Likewise, luxury in Persian is expressed in several terms, as blessing or gift (*nimet*), or as plush, sumptuous, palatial, gorgeous, magnificent (*mücellel*), both used in the context of the riches of courtly opulence, great wealth or luxuriousness. In modern Turkish dictionaries these words, *nimet* and *mücellel*, both correspond to abundance, and the latter also to 'a cloud that rains everywhere'.

23 Artan, 'Aspects of the Ottoman Elite's Food Consumption'. Reindl-Kiel, '*Simits* for the Sultan, Cloves for the Mynah Birds'; Reindl-Kiel, 'Breads for the Followers, Silver Vessels for the Lord'; Reindl-Kiel, 'Audiences, Banquets, Garments and Kisses'.

24 For an exhibition at the Topkapı Palace Museum: Pekin, ed., *A Drop of Pleasure*.

25 There is an ever-expanding literature on the trade of luxury items in this period: Jan de Vries, 'Luxury in the Dutch Golden Age'; Rittersma, ed., *Luxury in the Low Countries*; Corrigan and others, eds, *Asia in Amsterdam*; Swan, 'Early Modern Global Bling'; Swan, 'Fortunes at Sea: Mediated Goods and Dutch Trade, Circa 1600'; Swan, *Rarities of these Lands*; van Noord, 'Asia > Amsterdam'.

contained a variety of both manufactured and natural wonders. Conceived as microcosms or theatres of the world, and even as 'memory theatres', they were intended to impress visitors with the collector's command of art and nature, and their collecting prowess.[26] Around the same time, a special genre of painting known as 'Kunstkammer and Wunderkammer paintings' also began to flourish. In these paintings, hundreds of objects from around the world including geological, botanical, and zoological specimens, archaeological finds and ethnographic items, religious or historical relics, antiquities, and works of art are depicted along with their collectors and visitors.[27] In these paintings, figures are dwarfed by their prized possessions, accentuating their material wealth and the impressive nature of their inventories.

'Le superflu, chose très nécessaire', wrote Voltaire in his 1736 poem *Le mondain*. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the new global trade via various East India companies not only brought greater access to luxuries from distant lands, but also triggered innovation in production technologies, marketing strategies, and commercial and financial institutions. In all these ways it stimulated both production and consumption in Europe.[28] The widespread accessibility of rare and curious goods coincided with a new civility in middling and upper-class society, conveyed in new ways of socializing. But for the majority, new public places or spaces where leisure and entertainment took place, such as coffee houses and restaurants, shops and arcades, parks and gardens, and eventually the theatre and the museum, all remained luxurious venues. At this key moment of the birth of consumer

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26 The cabinets of curiosities conveyed symbolically the patron's control of the world through its indoor, microscopic reproduction. The best known cabinets of curiosities are the ones built by rulers and princes like the 'Green vaults' (Grünes Gewölbe) of August the Strong (1670–1733) in Dresden or the Kunstkammer of Peter the Great (1672–1725) in St. Petersburg but there were many merchants or academics who build their own cabinets of curiosities like Ole Worm, known as Olaus Wormius (1588–1654) and Bonifacius Amerbach (1495–1562) and his son Basilius Amerbach (1533–1591). The cabinets of wonders were extended by buying orders from the collectors to their agents or by gifting and regifting various items between the collectors themselves.

27 Renaissance paintings that depict domestic interiors replete with artefacts from far away places, such as Persian carpets and Chinese porcelain, have been described as 'visual inventory of consumer goods': Jardine, *Worldly Goods*, p. 9. For Kunstkammer paintings: Held, 'Artis pictoriae amator'; Filipezak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*; Schwartz, 'Love in the Kunstkamer'; Honig, 'The Beholder as Work of Art'; Honig, *Painting and the Art Market in Early Modern Antwerp*; van Suchtelen, *Room for Art in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp*; Marr, 'The Flemish "Pictures of Collections" Genre'; Groeneveld-Baadj, 'A World of Materials in a Cabinet without Drawers'.

28 The 'first global age' spans from the European voyages of discovery at the end of the fifteenth century to the period of divergence at the end of the eighteenth century: Gerritsen and Riello, eds, *The Global Lives of Things*. Scholars such as Chandra Mukerji, Richard Goldthwaite, Evelyn Welch, and Lisa Jardine, among many others, have demonstrated that the Renaissance was a period that saw not only the reassessment of ancient art and literature but also an increase in the exchange of material goods from around the world. Keating and Markey, 'Introduction: Captured Objects'.

society, while 'the shifting divide between need and desire, staples and luxuries' continued to preoccupy statesmen and intellectuals, luxury became a keynote for the Enlightenment.[29]

> On the one hand, Enlightenment culture adapted itself to luxury as a positive social force, viewing it with confidence as an instrument (and indication) of the progress of civilization. On the other hand, it feared luxury as a debilitating and corrosive social evil, clinging to classical critiques of excessive indulgence and wanton profligacy, urban chaos and plebeian idleness.[30]

Ottomanists have also been weighing in on the side of an eighteenth-century quantum jump in the demand for commodities and the growth of consumption (implicitly cross-class, even though social hierarchy remains undiscussed). But they have not really engaged in carefully and empirically exploring consumption habits from the 1450s to the 1650s.[31] Whether in the sixteenth century or later, in the fragmented yet interconnected Mediterranean world it is generally agreed that the rise of consumer culture begins with luxury trade. But then numerous questions arise: what were these coveted luxury goods that the Ottomans were enchanted with? Where did they originate? Who were the agents and who were the luxury seekers who believed they were entitled to 'the best' and were ready to pay for it?

Luxuries produced, traded, treasured or used, modified, and destroyed in the Mediterranean basin shed light on a large array of cross-cultural encounters. In the autumn of 1583, the Venetian merchant ship *Gagliana Grossa* sank near the Gnalic rocky inlet in Dalmatia. It was carrying luxury items of glass such as spectacles, bottles, pitchers, bowls, and mirrors originating from the Murano workshops, together with semi-finished products and raw materials such as brass sheets and wire, tinned steel sheets, galvanized sheet metal, tin, lead bleach, mini (lead oxide), cerusite (lead carbonate), mercury and cinnabar (mercury sulfite).[32] Among the most striking pieces were a 43-metre-long piece of woven silk cloth and five metres of *damask* associated with Nurbanu Sultan, the mother of Murad III, who was known for her love of luxury and fashion. In a letter of June 1583 to the *bailo* she requested bales of silk, robes of silk *damask*, and gold cloth as 'gifts' and in one instance, small lapdogs

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29 'The single most important social and political idea of eighteenth-century England': Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought*; Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, pp. 74–84. See also Hont and Ignatieff, *Wealth and Virtue*; Hont, 'The Early Enlightenment Debate on Commerce and *Luxury*'; Scott, *Literature and the Idea of Luxury*.

30 Berg and Eger, 'Introduction'.

31 From the 1450s to the 1650s, the Mediterranean was changing indeed: the population grew, urbanization increased, and demands for goods escalated, to which supply, too, responded, resulting in the proliferation of both regional and interregional trade.

32 Radić Rossi and others, 'The Gnalić Shipwreck'.

of the kind so fashionable among Venetian aristocratic ladies.[33] In another letter written to the Venetian bailo in August 1594, Safiye Sultan, then the queen mother, demanded quite unpleasantly that the feather-like aigrettes bought from Venice should be a privilege of the sultan's court and should not fall into other people's hands. The aigrettes were composed of 'several thin glasses in various colours, put together in a way to resemble the feathers of herons and other birds, which look beautiful and compete successfully with the true feathers and aigrettes that are worked with great craftsmanship and at high cost'.[34] In November, however, she said that the aigrettes were already held in no esteem at all.

On the one hand, the most valuable items imported from the West continued to be textiles of various kinds, including silks, that continued to be a luxury commodity until well into the eighteenth century. However, this is not reflected in what we know about the cargos of vessels sailing between Ottoman ports and Western Europe. Studies in this regard reveal them to have been carrying mostly necessities, raw materials or intermediate goods, such as medicaments, mercury, dyestuffs, even iron nails though we increasingly find cases of Sèvres porcelains being shipped to Istanbul for those with expensive tastes, including especially coffee cups.[35] On the other hand, it is striking that in Ottoman inventories of upper-class men and women from the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, nearly all objects of luxury and status are from the East, namely from Syria, Iran, and India.[36]

Ottoman Viziers and the Geographical Range of Conspicuous Objects

Recently, cutting-edge scholarship on the questions listed above has moved from the origins of consumer society to a recognition of the integral relation between material and intellectual culture.[37] While this has yet to be recognized and internalized by Ottomanists, for the most part, their notion of luxury has not and its presence or role in the Ottoman Empire has not gone beyond

33 For Nurbanu's requests and letter of June 1583 to the bailo: Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 281. See also Arbel, 'Nûr Bânû (*c.* 1530–1583): A Venetian Sultana?'. Hundreds of objects and accessories, which were ordered during the renovation of the harem quarters by Safiye and Nurbanu sultans had been removed by the insurance company after the accident.

34 Molà, 'Material Diplomacy: Venetian Luxury Gifts to the Ottoman Empire', p. 76; for a drawing of such an aigrette by Jacopo Ligozzi, see fig. 2.2 (p. 78).

35 Eldem remarks that apart from textiles, manufactured goods were practically absent from French imports to the Middle East. Listed are various qualities of paper, sugar, coffee, indigo, cochineal, drugs, and spices, as well as corals, musks, and Peruvian bark (*kınakına*), and occasionally tiles, porcelain, or playing cards: Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul*. See also Eldem, 'Le commerce des herbes'.

36 Artan, 'Objects of Consumption'.

37 Berg and Eger, 'Introduction'.

the admonitions of Ottoman men of letters such as Gelibolulu Âli (d. 1600), Na'îmâ (d. 1716), and Süleyman Penâh (d. after 1786) against it, or perhaps Mandeville's 1714 paradox that in a modern commercial society 'luxury is anything that is not a necessity'.[38] It should be noted that Na'îmâ, who kept a keen eye on the riches of the sultans, numerous viziers, paşas, and provincial grandees, and provided curious information about their wealth and possessions, stressed the royal and dynastic need for luxury.[39] He devoted multiple pages to emeralds obtained from Egypt and via Spain.[40] Unlike the Ottomans, however, Mandeville regarded *luxury* as beneficial for economic prosperity.

As most contemporary research into luxury has its roots in the classic concept of conspicuous consumption, we inevitably come up against the proposition that the rich tend to consume highly conspicuous goods in order to display their wealth and to gain social status. In the Ottoman world the private riches of some great dignitaries, grand viziers or governors of Egypt had attracted the attention, frequently the disapproving attention of their contemporaries. Hadım Süleyman Paşa (d. 1547), for example, was a two-time governor of Egypt, the commander of the first Ottoman expedition to India, and finally grand vizier. In their time, grand viziers Rüstem Paşa (d. 1561) and Nasuh Paşa (d. 1614) were also famous (or notorious) for their wealth.[41]

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38 Sekora noted a positive revaluation of luxury as a social and economic benefit over the course of the eighteenth century, propelled by imperial and commercial expansion and voiced most powerfully by Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of The Bees: or, Private Vices, Public Benefits* (1714) and David Hume's 'Of Luxury' (1752). 'Mandeville's paradox' is named after Bernard Mandeville (d. 1733), a philosopher, political economist, and satirist who satirically argued that virtue leads to economic stagnation and collapse, while vice leads to a flourishing society, 'Fraud, Luxury, and Pride must live; Whilst we the Benefits receive': Turner, 'Mandeville against Luxury'. For Hume's treatment of luxury as a more complex and more subtle account in its final form, see: Cunningham, 'David Hume's Account of Luxury'. See also Jennings, 'The Debate about Luxury'.

39 The fourteenth-century thinker Ibn Khaldun discusses the role of luxury in the lives of rulers and settled urban dwellers as compared with nomads, and its ethical dimension, in several places in his *Muqaddimah*: Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, p. 161: 'Subsequent improvement of their conditions and acquisition of more wealth and comfort than they need, cause them to rest and take it easy […] which leads to formation of the most developed luxury customs. They take the greatest pride in the preparation of food and a fine cuisine, in the use of varied splendid clothes of silk and brocade and other (fine materials), in the construction of ever higher buildings and towers, in elaborate furnishings for the buildings, and the most intensive cultivation of crafts in actuality […] They build castles and mansions, provide them with running water […] and compete in furnishing them (most elaborately). They differ in the quality of the clothes, the beds, the vessels, and the utensils they employ for their purposes […] Sedentary people are much concerned with all kinds of pleasures. They are accustomed to luxury and success in worldly occupations and to indulgence in worldly desires'.

40 Na'îmâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'îmâ*, pp. 1553–54.

41 Another example concerns Semiz Ali Paşa (d. 1565), the grand vezir who followed Rüstem in office. His parting gifts to Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, the Austrian Habsburg ambassador (1554–1562) were: 'three well-bred horses, a "really beautiful" robe interwoven with gold

Narrative sources testify in passing to luxury goods that such a select few were able to accumulate by way of displaying their power and magnificence. Necipoğlu quotes Mustafa 'Âli's list of Rüstem's possessions at his death in 1561. In addition to cash, slaves, horses, and camels, there were: '80,000 turbans, 5,000 kaftans and robes of honour, 1,100 gold caps, 209 arms, 2,000 armours and cuirasses, 500 jewel-inlaid gold saddles, 1,500 silver-gilt helmets, 130 pairs of gold stirrups, 760 gilded swords, 1,000 silver-gilt rapiers and 32 priceless jewels'. These were probably received as gifts or tributes or booty, and were accumulated for later distribution as gifts. Although Ottoman etiquette expected displays of pomp and grandeur from dignitaries, personal attitudes, dispositions, and peculiarities were also important. According to bailo Bernardo Navagero, though, the miserly Rüstem 'appreciated all kinds of presents, he did not care much for jewels'.[42] On the contrary, Nasuh Paşa's bushels of pearls, we are told, made a great impression on the European audience. In *Coppie d'une lettre*, a pamphlet biography, it is noted that 'the riches of Nassuf were so great and proportionable to his Fortune, as after his death they found about two bushels of diamonds and pearles'; 'there were found in Nassufs house 80 bagges of gold, each Bag containing 10000 *chequinos*'.[43] In Michel Baudier we hear in more detail about the fabulous wealth of Nassuf: 'they found in his Cofers at the time of his death a Million of Gold in Sequins, and in siluer Coine eight hundred thousand Crownes, three bushels of precious Stones not wrought, a bushell of Diamonds not set in gold, and two bushels of great round Pearles of inestimable value'.[44] Yet another early retelling of the death of Nassuf is by Thomas Herbert, writing in 1634 about his travels in Asia. He offers a brief account of Nassuf's career as an example of the dangers that befall powerful individuals in the Ottoman Empire.

> Nassuf, in the height of his fortunes, at the instigations of his wife (the Grand Signiors daughter) was strangled in his bed by eight Caepigies, and his treasure (no lesse then eighty bags of gold, and in stones then two bushels of Diamonds and Pearles) fell to his Master, for which perhaps

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thread, a box containing an antidote from Alexandria for poison, and a glass vessel filled with balm worthy of an "allied prince". All of this was rather routine. In return, he requested from Busbecq: 'a coat of mail of a size to fit his tall and stout frame, a sturdy charger to which he could trust himself without fear of a fall (for he has difficulty in finding a horse which is equal to his great weight), and lastly, some bird's-eye maple, or similar wood, such as we use for inlaying tables': Necipoğlu, 'Connectivity, Mobility and "Portable Archaeology"'. Ali Paşa's estate was converted into cash immediately after he passed away. Necipoğlu has shed light also on the riches of the next grand vezir, Sokollu Mehmed Paşa (d. 1579), put on display in the palaces he built and furnished with his royal wife: Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, pp. 331 ff.

42 Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, pp. 315–16.

43 *Coppie d'une lettre* (1615), pp. 1335–36 and pp. 1336–37. This obituary-like account was then paraphrased into English by Grimston, 'A continuation of this present history', included in the 1687 continuation of Richard Knolles's *Generall Historie of the Turkes*.

44 Baudier, *The History of the Imperiall Estate of the Grand Seigneurs*, p. 151.

> this infortunate Usurer, lost his life, a iust recompence for thrusting Cycala Bassa, Visier of Babylon, from his principality.[45]

It is unfortunate that the possessions of Karabaşzade Hüseyin Efendi (Cinci Hoca), a spiritual healer (d. 1648), who is known to have accumulated immense wealth by accepting bribes, were not enumerated.[46]

In a series of studies on vizieral status, power, and luxury, Hedda Reindl-Kiel has shed more light on such goods. The daily life of Bazergânzâde (Tüccarzâde) Silahdar Mustafa Paşa (d. 1642), the son of a merchant who conducted trade with Venice and the favourite and intimate friend of Murad IV, has been investigated by Reindl-Kiel in the light of two treasury registers of his recording incoming and outgoing items (over 1635–1640). This has led to Silahdar Mustafa Paşa's identification as yet another embodiment of privileged life and elitism.[47] Noted, are not only his good looks, tens of shoes, abundance of garments, and a whole army of tailors and passement-makers that worked for him, but also his endless partying and enjoyment of music, leisure, and pleasure. Hence the *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions of luxury, both as '[t]he habitual use of, or indulgence in what is choice or costly' and as '[r]efined and intense enjoyment', are expressed perfectly through his person. He pampered his sheykh, a certain Ahmed Üsküdarî, with fabrics, Indian *kutni*, Damascene *'inayet*, muslins, and shawls. After he became second vizier (when he was only twenty-six), he presented sable furs, emerald buttons for a short cloak made of cashmere shawl, a golden longneck bottle, a jewelled crystal goblet, horses, horse tacks and trappings, and numerous garments to Murad IV. The same two registers also provide a wealth of information on Istanbul's merchants of luxury goods, particularly jewellers and gem traders.[48] A diamond framed

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45 Herbert, *A relation of some yeares trauaile*, p. 29. His immense treasure revived the Sultan's exhausted treasury: whole bushels of pearls, over a million gold ducats and over a million thalers, 1018 gold and silver sabers studded jewels, one of which alone, set with diamonds, was valued at fifty thousand ducats; magazines full of Persian (Acem) and Egyptian carpets of atlas, damask, velvet, and gold cloth; eleven hundred horses, including four hundred Arabian mares; forty pairs of broad stirrups of solid gold, eighteen thousand camels, four thousand muzzles, six thousand oxen, half a million sheep were the result of the plunder and oppression, the greater part of which now accrued to the imperial treasury: von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches*, pp. 474–75. See also Steggle, 'A Lost Turk Play'. For the confiscated goods of another Nasuh Paşa (d. 1714): Akalın, 'Nasuh Paşa'nın Hayatına ve Servetine Dair'.

46 Karaçelebizade, *Ravzatü'l Ebrar Zeyli*, pp. 14–15, 18; Abdi Paşa, *Vekayinâme*, p. 10; Şem'dânî-Zâde, *Mür'i't- Tevarih*, p. 138.

47 Reindl-Kiel, *Leisure, Pleasure – and Duty*.

48 Gems, diamonds, and jewellery reached Istanbul via overland networks. They were also imported from northern Europe. Antwerp and Amsterdam were two major hubs for the cutting and processing of precious stones. On Jan Hendrik Meijer, a Hamburg-born jewellery merchant who had conducted business in Istanbul since 1740, and his business partner Cornelis van der Oudermeulen junior, the underage son of a wealthy jewellery merchant in Amsterdam that sheds light on the precious stones and jewellery trade in eighteenth-century Istanbul: van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal*

with other stones, bought to be sent to Medina, and jewelled aigrettes, belts, froggings, swords, armbands (as well as their prices) are recorded, together with celadons and other Chinese porcelains. Among the latter was a jewelled pitcher and bowl in 'Indian style' bought for an amazing sum. Moreover, not only sapphires, a novelty in the early seventeenth-century Ottoman capital, but also exotic items such as bezoar stones, rhinoceros horns, and ambergris are listed among the possessions of Silahdar Mustafa Paşa, suggesting his connections with the captains of trading ships docking at the Arsenal in the Golden Horn. Such ships would frequently come in with freight from Egypt, the major transhipment point for goods from India, Southeast Asia, and East Asia as well as East Africa that were headed for the Levant and Europe. Captains of such trading vessels had to win over the authorities of the ports they called at by means of customary gifts — usually a small percentage of their valuable cargo.

The treasury register of another high dignitary, Kaplan Mustafa Paşa (twice grand admiral in 1666–1672 and 1678–1680), listed outgoing gifts in 1658–1662, when he was governor of Tripoli.[49] Reidl-Kiel senses a certain conservatism in this list, for it comprises only textiles, whereas in the inventory of an unidentified governor, stationed probably in Şehrizor in Northern Iraq in 1659–1661, she has been able to locate not only luxury textiles, but also quilts and embroideries, Chinese porcelain, opulently decorated arms and armour, horse-trappings, sable and ermine furs, agates, silver candle-holders, rosaries, and spoons made of valuable materials. This other register includes gifts sent to the patron's family members, sons and brothers, and in only one case did one of them receive an apparently rare object from Inner Asia, an Usbekian knife. However, his textiles, comprising Indian, Iranian, and Baghdadî varieties, displayed his access to rarities. Reindl-Kiel notes that it was not only the price of the furnishings, cushions, or bolsters (exchanged as gifts) that made them objects of conspicuous consumption, but also their symbolic meaning: '[T]he height of seats, i.e. the number and quality of cushions allocated for one person, had already served as an indication of rank in the Arab Middle Ages and continued to do so until the end of the eighteenth century'.[50]

In the aftermath of the disastrous Vienna campaign (1683), several confiscation records listing the executed grand vizier Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa's assets in Belgrade, Edirne, and Istanbul reflect something else, built on an individual's sense and power of exclusivity. First, he had multiple palatial

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System, pp. 1–17. For the diamond trade and gem merchants operating between India and the Ottoman Empire: Reindl-Kiel, 'Diamonds Are a Vizier's Best Friends'; Reindl-Kiel, 'The Must-Haves of a Grand Vizier'.

49 Reindl-Kiel, 'Luxury, Power Strategies and the Question of Corruption'; Reindl-Kiel, 'Status, Honour and Luxuries'.

50 Sadan, 'A propos de Martaba'; Sadan, 'Ādāb – règles de conduite, et ādāb – dictons, maximes'. See also Tunç Yaşar, 'House Decoration and Salon Manners in Late Ottoman Etiquette Books'; Tunç Yaşar, 'Encountering the Age of Civility'; Tunç Yaşar, *Alafranga Halleri*.

residences: two in Edirne proper, one in Demirtaş (near Edirne), one in Izmir, and five in Istanbul. The latter included, intramurally, one in the Süleymaniye-Kepenekçi Sinan neighbourhood, and extramurally, those in Bahariye Taşlık Burnu (near Eyüb), Kuruçeşme, Ortaköy, and Beylerbeyi. Second, each and every one of them featured perhaps too many of the typical paraphernalia of an elite household. His personal belongings — illustrated manuscripts, luxury furs and textiles, weapons and horse-trappings — were in a way typical of a man of his stature, and yet were atypical in terms of their numbers.[51] Third, some elements of his wealth were completely out of the ordinary. Thus he had two plates of monochrome yellow Chinese porcelain, located in his newly built Edirne palace, that were truly exceptional luxury items. These must have been yellow-glazed Ming porcelain, originally produced for the Chinese emperor, and it would have required great taste to discern their value on the part of either the grand vizier or whoever it was that persuaded him to buy them.[52] In this same vein, Reindl-Kiel has convincingly argued that he must have developed a great passion for pearls and especially diamonds, 'for in his inventory, pieces of jewellery without diamonds are virtually non-existant'. Included are some most spectacular jewelled aigrettes, both for men and women, adorned with beautiful plumes.[53] Birds and feathers from places as far away as New Guinea were among the luxury items that had to have been imported to the Ottoman world.[54] Among exotica, we find chunks of aloe wood (one piece weighting nine kilograms), and strings of beads in aloe wood (*kalambek*, so-called after an island in the Indian Ocean), sandalwood perfume, ambergris, bezoar stones, and other imports from various places in Iran, North Africa, the Balkans, or Europe.[55]

In contrast, when we come to the last Köprülü grand vizier, Amcazâde Hüseyin Paşa (d. 1702), he himself and the women in his household had very little jewellery, while what he had was mostly diamonds.[56] Still, also

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51 To compare with the domestic possessions of an eighteenth-century grand vizier: Bouquet, 'Un grand vizir dans son palais'; Bouquet, 'Un grand vizir dans sa maison'.

52 For a pair illustrated by Krahl: Krahl and Ayers, *Chinese Ceramics in the Topkapi Saray Museum Istanbul*, II, p. 89 (pl. 82, 84).

53 Swan, 'Dutch Diplomacy and Trade in *Rariteyten*'; Swan, 'Birds of Paradise for the Sultan'; Swan, 'Exotica on the Move: Birds of Paradise in Early Modern Holland'.

54 Among all the treasures brought back from Mexico, works done with feathers were certainly the objects the most appreciated in Europe. Their iridescent colours and meticulous craftsmanship rapidly brought about the success of the most famous cabinets of curiosities. Ferrer-Joly, *Feathers: Visions of Pre-Columbian America*; Hanß, 'Making Featherwork in Early Modern Europe'; Hanß, 'New World Feathers and the Matter of Early Modern Ingenuity'; Hanß, 'Knowledge Production, Image Networks, and the Material Significance'; Hanß, 'Feathers and the Making of Luxury Experiences'.

55 Fricke, 'Making Marvels—Faking Matter'.

56 For seven rings, two bracelets, four aigrettes, four tiaras (for male dancers dressed as women), sashes and belts: Yardım, 'Tereke Kayıtlarından Hareketle Bir Osmanlı Vezirinin'; Yıldız, 'Bir Osmanlı Veziriazamının Mal Varlığı'.

noteworthy are pieces of amber and an amber plate, as well as resin used for jewellery, plus his precious prayer beads, including two made of coral and walrus tusks (*nâka dişi*) possibly acquired via Venice.[57] Some amount of hair dye (made from a bush from Crete, *lâdin*) and various antidotes catch the eye and also suggest Mediterranean connections. More significantly, his furnishings included many kinds of textiles from India. He had two costly chests of drawers, a stool, and three low couches all identified as '*Hind işi*'. Among other low couches there were three identified as '*Derviş Gedâ işi*', possibly referring to the work of immigrant dervishes from Inner Asia living in the *tekkes* of Istanbul and making a living as skilled craftsmen. *Gedâ*, which is one of the most frequent character types in Divan literature, refers to the beggar, homeless and forlorn.

The 1730 estate inventories of Damad İbrahim Paşa, his steward Kethüda Mehmed, and the grand admiral Kaymak Mustafa Paşa further confirm the standard valuables of early eighteenth-century grandees and their peers.[58] This is even more interesting because of the current scholarly emphasis on the shift in patterns of Ottoman consumption throughout the eighteenth century. The new paradigm does not provide a convincing overview of either the availability of luxury goods, local products or imports, or the rise of a new social class.[59] However, the reports of the period's Venetian bailo to the Doge shed a different kind of light on the luxury possessions of the few privileged that no other type of documentation can. These have to do not with lists of diplomatic gifts, but with the gifts that were privately exchanged on special occasions (such as *bayrams*) as well as foreign envoys' private visits, including 'presents' requested from the ambassadors by these three grandees and numerous lesser members of the court in the 1720s.[60] In other words, they represent a kind of ongoing extortion.

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57 Rijks, "Unusual Excrescences of Nature".

58 Karahasanoğlu, 'Osmanlı Uygulamasında Müsadere'; Arı, 'Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Paşa'nın Zevcesi'. Compare with the material world of the seventeenth-century royal ladies: Küpeli, 'IV. Murad'ın Torunu Fatma Hanım Sultan'ın Muhallefatı'; Küpeli, 'Kösem Sultan'a Ait Bir Muhallefat Kaydı'; Sağır, 'Vâlide Turhan Sultan'ın Muhallefâtı'. See also: Sarıbal, 'Pertevniyal Valide Sultan'ın Hazinesine Dair Tutulan Bir Defterin Analizi'.

59 Akçetin and Faroqhi, eds, *Living the Good Life*.

60 The embassy had a list which gave the number and kind of articles expected and also a supply of articles called the ragionateria: Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, pp. 45–46. Among them, the Head of the Chancery, Üçanbarlı Mehmed Efendi (1718–1730), stood out for his repeated requests. When he returned to Venice in 1554, Domenico Trevisan, the bailo, appealed to the signoria for the Venetian red, purple, and black fabrics which had been requested by Rüstem Paşa: Albèri, ed., *Relazioni*, p. 177. For luxury objects sought by the pre-eighteenth-century Ottoman elite from Venice: Raby, 'The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte'; Howard, 'Cultural Transfer between Venice and the Ottomans'. See also: Kurz, *European Clocks and Watches in the Near East*; Pedani, *Venezia porta d'Oriente*, pp. 100–09; Fabris, 'Artisanat et culture: recherches sur la production vénitienne et le marché ottoman au xvie siècle'; Stanley, 'Ottoman Gift Exchange: Royal Give and Take'; Hanß, 'Baili e ambasciatori'.

These 'requests' were varied in range, from a pair of lapdogs for Nurbanu Sultan to a ship's lantern made of gold-plated copper sent to Cigalazâde Sinan Paşa in the late sixteenth century.[61] In the context of the early eighteenth century, competing with numerous robes and various kinds of luxury textiles (mostly gold cloth and velvets), plus lots of glass and mirrors are a number of canaries. Having been brought to Europe by Spanish sailors from the Macaronesian Islands (the Azores, Madeira, and the Canary Islands), this small song bird was first bred in captivity in the seventeenth century, and became popular and fashionable in royal courts. They were in short supply and this drove the price up, but Italians obtained their hens and were able to breed them. Likewise, the Italian nobility took great pride in lapdogs, and a few are recorded in the bailo's list as gifts. More glasswork, chandeliers, and lights 'requested for a festival', as well as opera glasses, English eye-glasses, telescopes, barometers and thermometers are significant in this group of most wanted gifts. In addition to glass cabinets, cooling chests, tortoise shell and velvet boxes, we also come up against unspecified kinds of medicine, bottles of *triaca* (theriac, a supposed antidote against poison, especially snake venom), *pomatum* (pomade, a scented ointment or oil), *polvere viperino* (powdered viperine snake), and *ballini* (whale baleens?). There are only a few silver vessels or tableware (such as a basin), and it is surprising to find silver service sets for coffee and chocolate — one of them identified as a set for children. Multiple (gold and silver) watches (and chains), gold snuff boxes, guns, pistols and locks, and miscellaneous small things most probably made of precious metals were among the repeated requests. Toiletry was limited to boxes of perfume, comb cases, and crystal bottles. Curiously, perishable luxuries too, such as fruit, vegetables, flowers, and bulbs, were also listed among the bailo's gifts. Delicacies such as Piacenza as well as Dutch and English cheeses, candies, boxes of sweets, sugar, chocolate, rosolio (a sweet liqueur) were highly desirable.[62] (Cheese was not an uncommon gift from an Italian state, and was often requested by Ottoman officials who had developed a taste for Italian cheese. Francesco II Gonzaga (r. 1484–1519), too, sent wheels of the best Mantuan cheese to Bayezid I[63]). The reports to the Doge say that sometimes the bailo had to purchase his gifts (mirrors, for example) at Istanbul markets. Naturally, there were many factors which made a luxury object very luxurious. With

61 For the gold-plated copper ship's lantern (1590–1600): Sadberk Hanım Museum, inv. nos 9029–M.936. Sinan Paşa, son of Cicala, was a Genoese convert who held the offices of Grand Admiral and Grand Vizier in the 1590s. He was the son of a pirate from Messina, Visconte di Cicala, in the service of Charles V.

62 Compare with: Gatward Cevizli, 'Portraits, Turbans and Cuirasses'.

63 Gatward Cevizli, 'Portraits, Turbans and Cuirasses': a gold necklace worth 550 ducats, a belt with a value of 50 ducats, 200 ducats in coins ('testoni') — in return for horses he received. In July 1491 instructions were given to deliver twenty-five pieces of cheese to the envoy Bernardino Missaglia in preparation for his forthcoming mission. See also: Gatward Cevizli, 'More Than a Messenger'; Bourne, 'The Turban'd Turk in Renaissance Mantua'.

mirrors in such high demand in near-contemporary Paris, we are told that a Venetian mirror, framed in a rich border of silver, was worth more than a painting by Raphael. Both were found among the possessions of Jean-Baptiste Colbert (d. 1683). The mirror, measuring 46 × 26 inches, cost 8016 francs, the painting only 3000.[64] Likewise, in 1640, a crystal lantern (*kibâra mahsûs billûr-ı münakkaş yel fanusu*), probably a decorated second ball placed over the lamp to prevent the candle or oil wick from being blown out in the open air, was on sale on the market for 240 *akçes*, an impressive amount compared with all other glassware prices.[65] Among the gifts the bailos in Istanbul are listed as having received in return are: fruit, flowers, and sweet drinks (sherbet), as well as pipes, ancient medals, embroidered handkerchiefs, and once a Bohemian glass wrapped in a handkerchief.

There were various occasions, such as royal births, circumcisions, or weddings, on which gift-giving between the sultan, members of the imperial household, and representatives of foreign rulers is best described as a diplomatic custom. Some of the objects and items which did not survive in the Topkapı Palace coffers, ranging from portraits (of the Mantuan ruler Francesco II, Cem Sultan and the Mamluk Sultan), to a helmet meant to be gifted to Süleyman I by Venetian goldsmiths,[66] a clockwork organ made by the English clockmaker Thomas Dallam, sent in 1599 by Queen Elizabeth I of England to congratulate Sultan Mehmed III on his accession to the throne,[67] were all exquisite gifts of this kind. However, gift exchange was not always voluntary. The ambassadors in Istanbul often reported home the 'requests' they received, indicating that this experience was not limited to the Venetian bailo in the 1720s.

India and Further East

Much has been written about Ottoman trade in the Indian Ocean.[68] What has been missing so far is explorations in the luxury market; that is to say, the operations of the dealers and the mechanisms of the trade that provided objects

64 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, XV, 1969, 593A, after Bayramoğlu, '1640 Tarihli Es'ar Defteri. Cam Eşyanın Adları ve Fiatları. See also Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror*, p. 30.

65 Bayramoğlu, '1640 Tarihli Es'ar Defteri Cam Eşyanın Adları ve Fiatları'.

66 Necipoğlu, 'Süleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power'; Necipoğlu, '*Visual Cosmopolitanism* and Creative Translation'; Rapp, 'Der Pergamentriss zu Sultan Süleymans "Vierkronenhelm"'.

67 Carswell, 'The Queen, the Sultan, and the Organ'; Danson, 'The Sultan's organ'; Mole, *The Sultan's Organ*; Wood, 'An Organ's Metamorphosis'; De Barros, 'The Gatekeeping Politics of "Good" Historicism'.

68 For gems, coconuts, nautilus shells from India and Chinese porcelain: Spieß, 'Asian Objects and Western European Courts in the Middle Ages'; DaCosta Kaufmann and North, eds, *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*. It is important to note that the Ottoman routes to the Indian Ocean were not entirely sea routes. There was also overland transportation, either to Suez in the Red Sea, or to Basra in the Persian Gulf. There is a huge

of conspicuous consumption for the Ottomans.[69] Imports from India and further east, stretching to Southeast Asia, must have been readily available, affordable, and popular enough for both Mustafa Na'îmâ Efendi (d. 1716), the court chronicler, and Süleyman Penâh Efendi (d. 1786), a bureaucrat in the Ottoman chancery, to become critical about imports competing with local goods.

Less than a century before Süleyman Penâh Efendi, the court chronicler Na'îmâ had written critically of Sheikh ul-Islam Karaçelebizade's (in office 1651) imposition of an overtly sensual type of loose trousers (*çintiyan*) on his servants, and more generally the diffusion of what he described as an over-ornate and wasteful style of dressing among lower status groups. Elsewhere, Na'îmâ complained about an excess of *luxury* imports, and also kept gossiping about those viziers whom he regarded as poorly or flamboyantly dressed, and who thereby attracted properly slanderous nicknames. At the same time, he absolutely stressed the royal, dynastic need for luxury. He conceded that a distinction had to be made between private spending and public forms of expenditure associated with the virtue of magnificence. But moralizing preachers' attacks on luxury or extravagance were suspect. The fundamentalist Vanî Efendi (d. 1685), for example, who rejected any innovation departing from the times and example of the Prophet Muhammad in order to argue vehemently for a rigidly austere way of life, was himself — Na'îmâ tells us — much given to luxury.[70]

Toward the end of the eighteenth century (around 1770–1786), Süleyman Penâh Efendi, whose brother Osman was the head of the Finance Office, complained about the outflow of currency because Indian fabrics were in high demand throughout the country.[71] He strongly advocated the complete prohibition of imports, as well as of the use of garments made of Indian fabrics, and argued that those who went against such rules should be fined and punished even if they were high-ranking officials. Süleyman Penâh lamented contemporary Ottomans' passion for splendour (*iḥtişām*), which, he claimed, had developed in the last forty–fifty years, i.e., from the 1730s–1740s. He remarked that those who would take pride in owning a 500-guruş sash did not have 'even the slightest degree of wisdom', and suggested that a 500-guruş sash was essentially no different than a five-guruş sash. Moreover, 500-guruş sashes would lead to strife and discord because not everyone could afford them. He further argued that the local production of substitutes for certain

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literature on alternative Silk Routes. See also İnalcık, 'The India Trade'. For the West Indies: Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*.

69 In reference to the gifts the governor general of Yemen brought, Selânikî said there were nine sets of gifts including various wonders from India and China: Selânikî Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, p. 13.

70 Na'îmâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'îmâ*, IV, pp. 1712, 1799–1800.

71 Süleyman Penah Efendi, *Mora İhtilâli (1770)*, pp. 150–56; Zararsız, 'Süleyman Penah Efendi'; Berker, 'Mora İhtilâli Tarihçesi veya Penah Efendi Mecmuası'; Cezar, 'Osmanlı Aydını Süleyman Penah Efendi'nin Sosyal, Ekonomik ve Mali Konulardaki Görüş ve Önerileri'; Telci, 'Bir Osmanlı Aydınının XVIII. Yüzyıl Devlet'.

foreign imports should be supported by the state, and that weavers should be encouraged to make fabrics from local cotton grown in Rumelia and the Morea that would be similar in form to those imported from India and Tunisia. Within a short time, he wrote, the quality of goods produced in the Ottoman Empire would come up to that of those imported from abroad.

Penâh Efendi also remarked that the use of silver and gold thread in the manufacture of luxury clothing was a loss for humanity because it led to a scarcity of coinage. He suggested that if the global production of such clothes could be calculated, it would likely be larger than the value of all the gold and silver extracted for coinage throughout the world. He continued to insist that kings and sovereigns should agree to ban the production of such threads for the common good. According to Penâh Efendi, the producers of silver and gold threads should produce luxury fabrics from silk, wool, and cotton, which could still be sold for high prices but would not lead to a public loss. Penâh Efendi also mentioned furs as an example of excess that contributed to the Ottoman trade deficit. Since the trade in furs could not be entirely banned, he suggested that certain kinds of furs should be assigned exclusively to high-ranking officials (*erbâb-ı merâtibe*) and prohibited for the rest of the population, both in the capital and in the provinces. He went on to criticize the importation of coffee from Yemen, and suggested that this crop could be planted in Egypt, Basra, and Jerusalem.[72] He noted how France had invested in the cultivation of coffee in the Americas and had, as a result, gained vast amounts of wealth. Likewise, if enough time and resources were invested in the ceramic industry at Kütahya, he said, its porcelain production would soon exceed Saxon products in quality and could even become on a par with Indian exports.[73]

In a way, for the Ottomans some of this was unusually mercantilistic and precociously in favour of import substitution, while with regard to conspicuous consumption, they were typical, indeed conventional words of wisdom that sought to impose social and economic conformity.

In Conclusion

The exotic contents of the *Zwarte Beer*, a ship that brought 'rare or unusual or curious objects [*rariteyten*]' to Ahmed I in December 1612 in no fewer than ninety-three crates, approximate the contents of early modern collections of wonders (or cabinets of curiosities).[74] Unusually rich as it was, the cargo of just

72 The colonial products such as coffee, sugar, indigo, and cochineal were increasingly appearing among the French export goods in its trade with the Ottoman Empire. According to Eldem, coffee's impact was more spectacular in the Ottoman world.

73 Penâh Efendi, *Mora İhtilâli (1770)*, pp. 146–47, 151–52; Artan, 'Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Princesses as Collectors'.

74 Swan compares the range and kinds of the object sent to Istanbul with the content of the Leiden apothecary Christiaen Porret's (d. 1627) Cunstcamer which included objects and

one ship also provides some insights into those who would have received it, the Ottoman luxury enthusiasts in the capital and beyond. However, not only did these objects not survive in the treasuries of the palace or in any modern collection, but they are also not to be found in Ottoman accounts, archival sources, or inventories. This absence might help to analyse the missing links in the Ottoman elite's access to, and display of luxuries.

First of all, this absence of *naturalia* from such records (like the taxidermy parrot, or shells and birds of paradise), or similarly of *artificialia* and *mirabilia* — those artful and wondrous items that came into the possession of dignitaries, whether they were enthusiasts or not — requires an explanation. There is no record of whether these were exhibited in the Imperial Palace or elsewhere, but Lady Mary Montagu's account of mummies in the Yedikule Treasury was certainly not a singular event. For example, the daily journals (*rûznâme*) of Mahmud I from the 1740s record that the sultan was presented with and entertained by the mummy of a crocodile as well as a taxidermy of an unspecified fish stuffed with hashish.[75] Such mummified crocodiles captivated the sultans from Selim II to Abdülmecid, and one still survives in the Topkapı Palace collections. An elementary explanation of their sporadic recording would have to do with the grim fate of such perishable exotica; but a thorough discussion of this conundrum exceeds the limits of this study.

In addition, it should be remembered that even when signifiers such as Delft-, Dutch-, or Amsterdam-made were included, it is impossible to identify and trace the post-1610 history of the cargo in the *Zwarte Beer* — apart from

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items ranging 'from natural resins to highly worked shells and nuts and from Chinese ink to Levantine weaponry — some of which are local, some exotic, all of which seem to have been costly and few of which are clearly useful'. For the contents of the Cunstcamer listed in the 1628 auction catalogue: Swan, 'Birds of Paradise for the Sultan'; Swan, 'Exotica on the Move'; Swan, 'Collecting *Naturalia* in the Shadow of Early Modern Dutch Trade'.

75 The translator of *Kharīdat al-ʿAjā'ib wa Farīdat al-Gharā'ib*, Maḥmūd al-Haṭīb, mentions a wondrous fish with a head like an owl that he saw during his journey to Mecca in 1531. He went on to tell that he saw a group of flying fish in the Eastern Mediterranean, and that he later saw one of those hung from the gate of the castle of Antalya: Coşkun, 'An Ottoman Preacher's Perception of a medieval Cosmography'. For two imperial decrees of Selim II, dated 16 March and 17 August 1574, for asking live or dead crocodiles from Egypt, and a petition of a certain Nikola Abelora in January 1845, about two rare things he brought from Egypt to sell in Istanbul: Diker and Ulaş, 'Muammadan Topkapı Sarayı'ndaki Mumyaya, Osmanlı'da Bir Acîb'üş-Şekil: Timsah'. One of these was a two-headed, six-legged, three-tailed goat and the other an eleven-foot-long crocodile skeleton. Another petition, dated January 1910 and signed by a certain Süleyman Zahit, an expelled and impoverished attendant of the imperial palace, is about his request for permission to display a mummy from the palace collections. Followingly, the inspection committee located the embalmed body of a crocodile with a human head, referred to as an 'acîb'üş-şekîl balık', in a coffin in the onion warehouse of the Steward's Office of the Topkapı Palace (Vekilharç Dairesi), together with a snake mummy. The committee stated that it was regrettable that these two had not been examined but kept in onion warehouses until then and agreed to put them on display to generate income for the navy. Diker and Ulaş remarked that no record of the mummy in question was found in the inventory catalogues of the Museum-i Hümayun collections.

(perhaps) a copy of Gerardus Mercator's *Atlas* (1595), bound in red velvet.[76] The Mercator, which became a popular atlas with many editions, is indeed a telling example, as it has played an important role as a successful commercial product as well. The volume presented to the Ottomans was likely the 1606 edition, published in Amsterdam by Jodocus Hondius (d. 1612) which, through Kâtib Çelebi's translation in 1653, came to testify the Ottoman vision of East Asia and the Pacific Rim. Kâtib Çelebi's claim that he used the 1621 Arnheim edition of Mercator's *Atlas Minor*, which he acquired from the probate of Karaçelebizâde Mahmud Efendi (d. 1653), in his *Cihânnümâ* (*Cosmography*) reveals the gradual dissemination of such desirable objects. In this case, this atlas played a crucial role in the formation of Ottoman conceptions of the increasingly globalizing world in the early modern period. At the same time, since most of the rarities and curiosities were related to distant geographies, particularly in the East, textual signifiers of foreignness in the inventories such as *Acem* or *Mısrî* and especially *Hindî*, must be investigated further. The latter, in particular, referred to objects not only from India, the Mughals, and beyond, but also to those from China, Japan, and the Americas — all of which may have been generically grouped as *Hindî*.

Furthermore, only when the intricacies of Ottoman long-distance trade and the luxury market, the interventionism of Ottoman economic policies, the peculiarities of the Ottoman ruling elite, and the stratification of urban classes are all taken into consideration, will it be possible to adequately address the Ottoman idea of luxury without quickly and superficially reducing it (i.e. its supposed absence) to a lack of curiosity, access, or finances. Curious or not, the ruling elite was obliged to spend, possess, and display their wealth, and to gain social status. 'The "old luxury", identified as a marker of status, relied on "grandeur and exquisite refinement" in order to distinguish the elite from other social groups'.[77] However, paradoxically, the ostentatious *display* of objects that came into the possession of dignitaries was unacceptable and often extremely dangerous, and could instigate confiscation and redistribution through the interventions of the court. The transfer of luxurious items from

76 No copy of Mercator's *Atlas* has been located at the Topkapı Palace Library or in the libraries that were generated from it: Goodrich, 'Old Maps in the Library of Topkapi Palace in Istanbul'; Kenning, 'The History of an Atlas: Mercator: Hondius'. In the 1606 edition, all 107 maps from the 1595 edition were included, as well as thirty-seven new maps, engraved by Hondius, of various authors. Maps of the Iberian Peninsula (seven), regional maps of Africa (four), Asia (eleven) and America (five), together with six new maps of European regions and four new continent maps were included. Its translation into Ottoman Turkish by Kâtib Çelebi in 1653 under the title *Levâmi'u'n-Nûr fî-Zulmet-i Atlas Minor*, a basic source for the chapters regarding Europe of *Cihânnümâ*, survives in multiple copies. For the author's copy: Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Nuruosmaniye, 2998. See also: Curry, 'An Ottoman Geographer Engages the Early Modern World'; Hagen, 'Introduction to Cihannüma'.

77 Ilmakunnas and Stobart, 'Introduction'.

certain individuals to others further complicated the process of acquisition and seems to have led to conspicuous absences in the records.

The 'new luxury', described as being socially inclusive, revolving around the notions of comfort, pleasure, and sociability, and encouraging civilized communication, still waits to be systematically analysed with regards to the Ottoman world. Starting with perhaps only a small section of the courtiers and trickling down the social ladder, the coveted luxury goods that the Ottomans were enchanted with had a broader impact on the urban elite.[78] While the ways in which the civilizing process unfolded both at the individual level and within society as a whole requires further scrutiny, its impacts can also be traced within the culture of the Ottoman elite.[79]

Finally, it should not be forgotten that in the Ottoman world, the idea of luxury, as well as that of fashionable luxuries, kept changing over time. Na'îmâ noted that the commander-turned-rebel-turned-commander Abaza Mehmed Paşa was a handsome man who was keen to style himself as a champion warrior:

> […] as the style of his garments and his stately behaviour were welcome to sultan's temperament, even the sultan imitated Abaza and wore the same model of dress […] The Abaza-cut kaftan, the Abaza-style turban and the Abaza-style horse-trappings and swords came into use among the people, and [only] after many years did they [become obsolete, and] come to be abandoned. Such is the custom since ancient times. Even if they are not natural or acceptable in themselves, whatever those — the holders of good fortune who are favoured by the sovereign — invent as costumes, dwellings and implements, the public will imitate them, and until there is a new mode, they will take high pride in it.[80]

All in all, while the negative association of luxury with excess and prodigality, corruption and vice still survives, the wealth of the Ottoman court and of the members of the ruling elite has long been studied (and admired) as reflecting the wealth of the empire.

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78 It is very likely that the estates of high-ranking courtiers were first shared among peers at the palace and then sold at the Covered Bazaar and then the remaining items were brought back to the palace. For the estate inventories of Kapu Ağası Gazanfer, Babüssaade Ağası Cafer, Yeniçeri Ağası Ali, Ser Hazin Osman, Kethüda-i Hazin Ali in the Topkapı Palace Museum Archive: TSMA.d 2314 / 0015; TSMA.d 4909; TSMA.d 4403.

79 As Reindl-Kiel has rightly argued, 'the myth of Ottoman meritocracy, implying a society without formal social boundaries, where advancement from bottom to top was generally possible, has tended to blur our perception': Rendl-Kiel, 'The Must-Haves of a Grand Vizier'.

80 Na'îmâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'îmâ*, II, p. 797.

ABSTRACT In modern scholarship and curatorship, Ottoman acquisitions of rarities, curiosities, or simply the precious, have continued to attract interest mainly over the sheer volume of what is (or was) held in the imperial treasury and palace. Thus imperial regalia, as well as the windfall from domestic confiscations or expropriations, diplomatic gifts and spoils of war, all amassed in the sultan's treasury, became synonymous with Ottoman opulence or luxury. At the same time, there were dimensions to what the Ottomans sought and possessed other than just the contents of the Inner Treasury at the Imperial Palace. Numerous relics and antiquities kept in the Imperial Palace and elsewhere also suggest that Ottoman luxury was much more than solid, material excess or superfluity. While Ottoman collections of naturalia, artificialia, and mirabilia, artful and wondrous items still require attention, a historical analysis is also needed to question whether the Ottoman idea of luxury was nothing more than a manifestation of prosperity and splendour, built on an unchanging sense of exclusivity and power in the Mediterranean.

KEYWORDS concept of luxury, imperial regalia, treasury, cabinet of curiosities, India and further East

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MATTHEW MARTIN

'A stone called *pourcellaine*'

Chinese Porcelain and Early Modern Natural History

Introduction

The global trade in Chinese porcelain has been a focus of much recent scholarship. Robert Finlay's *The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* presents a magisterial history of the global trade in, and consumption of, blue and white Chinese porcelain.[1] These remarkable ceramics, the secret of whose production was a Chinese monopoly for centuries, were highly sought after in Asia and the Middle East for their unique material and visual characteristics from a very early period, and a substantial organized export trade to these regions was active from at least the period of the Song Dynasty (960–1279). Chinese porcelain industries responded to demand from these foreign markets with wares tailored specifically for their needs, producing new forms and decoration which differed from indigenous Chinese tastes.[2] Finlay traces how the export trade in Chinese porcelain served to stimulate local ceramic industries in the Middle East and South East Asia to produce imitations of the imported Chinese wares, in a classic case of import substitution. These ceramics aimed to emulate the distinctive appearance and physical properties of the Chinese imports, but lacking the necessary technological knowledge to produce kaolinic porcelain, the imitations were invariably ersatz productions, usually only achieving a passing visual similarity to the Chinese originals.[3]

In Europe, by contrast, Chinese porcelain was available in only tiny quantities until the establishment of Indian Ocean sea routes to Asia by Portugal in the sixteenth century. Prior to this, porcelain reached Europe via sporadic indirect trade with the Islamic states of the Middle and Near Easts, and it circulated in Europe primarily as diplomatic gifts between

1 Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art*.
2 Carswell, 'An Early Ming Porcelain Stand'.
3 Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art*, pp. 169–74.

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Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean, ed. by Beatrice Falcucci, Emanuele Giusti, and Davide Trentacoste, HIMO 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2024), pp. 207–230
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princely rulers. The resulting rarity of these objects, and their mysterious material properties — whiteness, translucence, imperviousness to heat and liquids — saw them become the purview of princely and ecclesiastical treasury collections.

The commencement of an organized import trade of Chinese porcelain into Europe in the sixteenth century coincided with the rise of the discipline of natural history, a development which profoundly influenced European efforts to understand this material.[4] Porcelain became but one amongst a range of other wonderous objects — like shells, corals, and exotic plants and animals — arriving from Asia and the Americas, all of which formed foci of European natural philosophical speculation about a vastly expanded world. What exactly was porcelain? How was it made? Whereas in medieval Iran, for example, a long established, sophisticated ceramic industry took up the challenge of emulating Chinese porcelain — often with very beautiful results — in Europe, natural philosophers assumed a leading role in theories about the nature of porcelain and its method of manufacture; some of the most important early attempts to reproduce Chinese porcelain took place, not in the context of the ceramicist's workshop, but in the court-sponsored laboratory.[5] The quest to understand porcelain became subsumed into the natural philosophical quest to understand the nature of matter and the material world.

In this chapter I will explore how porcelain came to assume this unique significance in the European context, something entirely absent in the Chinese milieu. In this undertaking I am guided by Stacey Pierson's observation that we must avoid construing the global trade in porcelain, whose history Finlay traces, as a history of passive reception of a commodity universally admired in the same manner wherever it travelled. Pierson insists that the engagement with porcelain, its modes of consumption and use, were unique to the location of its reception.[6] Porcelain assumed cultural significances specific to the context in which it was appropriated. I will show how speculation about the wondrous material nature of porcelain in Europe was able to flourish in such exuberant fashion precisely because of its history as a rare, princely treasury object. But the suppositions of sixteenth-century scholars about the nature of porcelain were not just random fantasies. Many modern commentators readily dismiss early conjectures about porcelain's manufacture, like seashells being an essential ingredient, or the necessity of burying porcelain in the ground to bring it to maturation.[7] However, I will show how these ideas were derived from an early understanding of porcelain as a form of mineral material produced through manipulation of the forces of nature via human intervention. Such

4 See Findlen, *Possessing Nature*.
5 Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art*, p. 275.
6 Pierson, 'The Movement of Chinese ceramics'.
7 Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art*, pp. 65–67.

views can be found in the writings of scholars like Girolamo Cardano and Julius Caesar Scaliger and reflect notions about the subterranean genesis of minerals and the fertility of the earth that were circulating in the sixteenth century. These suppositions, rather than deriving from direct observation of examples of Chinese porcelain, were the products of a lingering tradition of scholasticism and Aristotelian speculative induction which persisted into the early eighteenth century, despite a growing body of practical knowledge about porcelain's chemistry. Nevertheless, these wild-seeming speculations were not entirely without constructive outcomes. It is surely no coincidence that European efforts to recreate a kaolinic porcelain like that produced in China finally met with success in Dresden, where the experimentalists Ehrenfried von Tschirnhaus and Johann Friedrich Böttger were retained by the porcelain-loving Saxon Elector Friedrich Augustus I. Yet, in the case of Böttger especially — an apothecary and alchemist — it seems very likely that part of the programme of works that resulted in *Jaspisporcelain*, a red stoneware body inspired by Chinese Yixing wares, was shaped by natural philosophical and alchemical speculation about the nature of the Nuremburg bolus, a red clay attributed with healing properties. It was not only access to Chinese ceramics found in Dresden, but also sixteenth-century natural philosophical speculations today dismissed as fantastic, that contributed to the technological breakthrough of a European kaolinic porcelain in the eighteenth century.

From the Treasury to the *Kunstkammer*: Porcelain between *Artificialia*, *Naturalia*, and *Exotica*

Prior to the sixteenth century, European familiarity with Chinese ceramics was extremely limited. Chinese porcelain arrived in Europe via indirect trade, travelling across the silk roads of Central Asia to the Middle Eastern states who were major consumers of these ceramics. From there they were traded on to Islamic centres in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. Often these porcelains were objects of princely exchange, gifts from one ruler to another in pursuit of diplomatic alliances.[8] The earliest archaeological evidence for the presence of Chinese ceramics in Europe comes from Almería in Southern Spain, where sherds of white porcelain from Northern China have been recovered, dating between the end of the ninth century and 1147, when the city was the principal port of Islamic Spain and one of the most important trading hubs in the Mediterranean.[9] Only slightly later are finds from Southern Italy, at the castle of Lucera in Apulia, a settlement occupied by Muslims whom Emperor Frederick II expelled from Sicily in 1224, and

8 Um and Clark, 'The Art of Embassy'.
9 Gutiérrez and others, 'The Earliest Chinese Ceramics'.

which was destroyed by troops of Charles II Anjou of Naples in 1300.[10] These finds emphasize the role of Islamic exchange networks in the early import of porcelain into the Mediterranean region.

It is in 1323 that we find the earliest mention of Chinese porcelain in a European archival document: the will of Queen Maria of Naples and Sicily includes a bottle and small bowls described as 'porchellano'.[11] The earliest extant piece of Chinese porcelain to reach Europe for which there is also documentary evidence is the so-called Fonthill vase, an example of Yuan Qingbai ware from around 1300 (Fig. 7.1). Sometime towards the end of the fourteenth century, this vase had been embellished with Gothic silver-gilt and enamel mounts, subsequently removed in the nineteenth century.[12] The lost mounts, recorded in an early eighteenth-century drawing, bore heraldic decoration indicating that the Fonthill vase had once been in the possession of the Neapolitan Angevin dynasty (Fig. 7.2).[13] The proximity of Naples to Muslim states in both Anatolia and North Africa must have presented increased opportunities for acquisition of porcelain through trade or exchange.

Figure 7.1. Fonthill vase, Qingbai ware, 1300–1340, Dublin, National Museum of Ireland. © National Museum of Ireland.

The fifteenth century saw the emergence of princely collections of porcelain in Italy, often as the result of diplomatic gift exchanges, first from Islamic rulers to European princes, and later between European princes. Mamluk sultans in Egypt sent Chinese porcelain to Doge Foscari of Venice in 1442, King Charles VII of France in 1447, to Doge Pasquale Malipiero in 1461, to Catherine Cornaro of Cyprus in 1470, to Doge Barbarigo in 1490 and to

10 Whitehouse, 'Chinese Porcelain from Lucera Castle', pp. 90–93.
11 Krisztinkovics and Korach, 'Un antico documento', pp. 27–30; Whitehouse, 'Chinese Porcelain in Medieval Europe', 73.
12 Jékely, 'The Budapest Drawing of the Fonthill Vase'.
13 Jékely, 'The Budapest Drawing of the Fonthill Vase', pp. 10–11.

the Signoria of Venice in 1498 and 1508.[14] In 1487 Lorenzo de Medici received a similar gift.[15] The Medici assembled an impressive collection of porcelain, growing from a few pieces owned by Piero in 1456 and 1463 to more than fifty at Lorenzo's death in 1492.[16] The largest Italian collection of porcelain was, however, that of Eleonora d'Aragona, Duchess of Ferrara; Eleonora was the daughter of King Ferrante d'Aragona of Naples and moved to Ferrara in 1473, when she married Duke Ercole d'Este. Her death inventory in 1493 lists over 170 pieces of porcelain, probably assembled by a variety of means: by purchase, family gift, diplomatic gift, and inheritance, highlighting the importance of exchanges of this material in fifteenth-century elite culture.[17]

Figure 7.2. Barthélemy Remy, Watercolour of the so-called Gaignieres-Fonthill vase, 1713. MS FR 20070 Fol. 8v. Source gallica.bnf.fr / BnF: <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc516680>.

Despite an exceptional collection like that of Eleonora d'Aragona, porcelain remained relatively scarce in pre-sixteenth-century Europe. This rarity, and corresponding value, was often reflected in the physical embellishment of porcelain objects with precious metal mounts, similar to those originally applied to the Fonthill vase in the late fourteenth century. Such mounts were characteristic of both sacred and secular medieval treasury objects, being applied to hardstone, glass, and rock crystal vessels. They both protected the precious object they were applied to, often in the process transforming the vessel's function by

14 Heyd, *Histoire du commerce*, II, p. 607 n. 7.
15 Spallanzani, *Ceramiche orientali*.
16 Spallanzani, *Ceramiche orientali*, pp. 55–56. Spallanzani and Bertelà, *Libro d'inventario*, pp. 14–15.
17 Clark, 'The Peregrinations of Porcelain'.

Figure 7.3. Katzenelnbogen bowl, Longquan celadon bowl in late Gothic mount, *c.* 1400, KP B II.240, Kassel, Hessian State Museum. © Museumlandschaft Hessen Kassel.

Figure 7.4. Andrea Mantegna, Adoration of the Magi, distemper on linen, 85.PA.417, Los Angeles, John Paul Getty Museum. 1495–1505. Digital image courtesy of Getty's Open Content Program.

adding handles or spouts, whilst increasing its value through the addition of elaborately wrought gold or silver to the resulting artwork. Many porcelain objects in early European collections received such mounts. A Song celadon ware bowl, enriched with Gothic mounts for Herzog Philipp von Katzenelnbogen *c.* 1435, is the earliest piece of Chinese porcelain in Europe to survive with its mounts intact. The bowl was acquired by the Duke in Akka while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land where it must have arrived via overland trade routes from China via Bagdad and Damascus (Fig. 7.3).[18] A Longquan celadon ware cup with English silver-gilt mounts, today in the Ashmolean Museum, is recorded in a 1532 inventory at New College, Oxford where it is said to have been presented by Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, warden of the college.[19]

The mounting of porcelain vessels also provides insight into late medieval thinking about the material nature of porcelain. An inventory drawn up in around 1379–1380 for Louis, duc d'Anjou, mentions a lidded bowl of 'a stone called *pourcellaine*, edged with silver-gilt and enamelled' amongst other treasury objects of silver, silver-gilt, and precious stones.[20] Noteworthy is the fact that the description of the bowl explicitly suggests that porcelain was seen as a type of stone. A similar characterization of porcelain as a stone is found in the 1371 will of Jeanne d'Evreux, queen of Navarre, who is said to have possessed a water jug of 'pierre de purcelleine' (porcelain stone) with a silver lid and mounts.[21] Interestingly, a 1483 inventory describes the Katzenelnbogen bowl as 'Erde von Indien' (earth of India).[22] The inventory of the duc de Berry, brother of the duc d'Anjou, compiled between 1401 and 1416 mentions a *pourcellaine* pot with a silver handle and a lid set with silver-gilt, another *pourcellaine* pot with a handle set in silver-gilt, and 'a carved pourcellaine ewer whose foot, lid and spout are silver gilt'.[23] As with the duc d'Anjou's bowl, de Berry's porcelain vessels appear in the inventory alongside similarly mounted goblets, covered cups and ewers of crystal, amethyst, agate, beryl, porphyry, and jasper.[24] As such, these porcelain objects functioned like vessels in other precious minerals to project the magnificence of their owner, forming elements of displays that, when shown to distinguished visitors to a court, demonstrated a prince's rank and right to sovereignty.[25]

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18 Schmidt, *Porzellan aus China*, pp. 11–13.

19 Canepa, *Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer*, p. 148.

20 'Une escuelle d'une pierre appelée pourcellaine, bordée d'argent doré et esmaillée', Léon de Laborde, *Glossaire français*, p. 107.

21 Leber, *Collection*, XIX, pp. 136–37.

22 Scherner and Cossalter-Dallmann, eds, *Schatzkammer der Geschichte*, p. 24, cat. no. 3.

23 *Inventaire*, p. 191; 'une aiguière de pourcellainne ouvrée, les pié, couvercle et biberon de laquelle sont d'argent doré', *Inventaire*, p. 215.

24 *Inventaire*, pp. 164–204.

25 Belozerskaya, *Luxury Arts*, p. 79.

That porcelain was construed as a type of mineral substance is emphasized by other, more unusual characteristics attributed to the material. Many precious stones found in treasury collections were believed to possess the ability to detect or neutralize poison. Ruby, emerald, rock crystal, agate, amethyst, and serpentine were all believed to indicate the presence of poison.[26] Such powers against poison were also attributed to porcelain, which was said to be able to neutralize poison, or to shatter on contact with it.[27]

A visual expression of these ideas construing porcelain as a material comparable with precious hardstones is to be found in one of the earliest depictions of Chinese porcelain in European painting: Mantegna's *Adoration of the Magi* (*c.* 1495–1505, Fig. 7.4). Executed whilst the artist was in service to the Gonzaga court, the painting depicts the three kings from the East offering their gifts to the Christ Child. The gifts are presented in luxurious vessels of mounted agate and jasper (Caspar's Persian cup and Balthasar's Turkish censer), as well as porcelain (the blue and white lidded porcelain cup, reminiscent of early fifteenth-century Ming porcelain wares, held by Melchior).[28] This painting is one of a small number of Italian paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including Bellini's 1514 *Feast of the Gods*, that indicate the great regard in which porcelain was held in Italy at this period — a material worthy of use by divinities, both pagan and Christian, and a material comparable to precious hardstones like agate and jasper.[29]

The collecting, mounting, inventorying, and display of porcelain objects alongside other artworks fabricated from hardstones, many of which were believed to be possessed of astonishing magico-medical properties, provides evidence for the regard in which porcelain was held in courtly circles in pre-sixteenth-century Europe, and the role it played in the expression of a ruler's magnificence.[30] This was no mere ceramic. It was a precious treasury object with remarkable material characteristics. Surprisingly absent from mentions of porcelain in these early documentary sources is any great interest in its Chinese origins. The complex and indirect routes by which porcelain objects made their way into European collections no doubt made the material's origins seem somewhat indeterminant and, frankly, of less interest than its mysterious physical properties which could be directly engaged with visually and physically by the object's owners.[31] Such lack of interest in the origins of objects is not atypical of late medieval collecting: in his study of Islamic glass objects in the treasury of San Marco from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Stefano Carboni has observed how *materia* and *lavoro*, unusual

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26 Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn*, pp. 127–54. Biringuccio, *The Pirotechnia*, pp. 124, 129. Collard, 'Le banquet fatal', pp. 338–40.

27 Weststeijn, 'Cultural Reflections', p. 222.

28 Carr, *Andrea Mantegna*, pp. 81–84. Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic World*, p. 124.

29 Carswell, 'The Feast of the Gods', pp. 180–85. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza*, p. 105.

30 DaCosta Kaufmann, 'From Treasury to Museum', pp. 139–40.

31 Clark, 'The Peregrinations of Porcelain', pp. 281–82.

materials and skilled craftsmanship, were the key categories determinative of an item's value, not provenance.[32]

The nature of European curiosity about porcelain would change with the establishment of seaborne trading routes to Asia by Portuguese navigators at the end of the fifteenth century, a development which would usher in a more regular and intensive import trade in Chinese porcelain into Europe. This would gradually transform the availability of porcelain, making it accessible to a wider section of society.[33] At the same time, the violent conquest of the Americas by Spain and Portugal would also result in the import into Europe of a bewildering range of new and exotic natural and manufactured objects. This expansion of European colonial horizons would form an important stimulus for profound intellectual developments in learned circles, refocusing parochial European cultural interests on the quest to understand the place of humanity in a much expanded cosmos. The rise of the natural philosopher, whose interests traversed the boundaries of medicine, natural history, and natural philosophy, saw learning transition away from a largely textual scholastic enterprise, to a theatrical and performative culture of observation and experimentation centred on the museum.[34] The wondrous objects arriving in Europe from across the globe, including porcelain, were now displayed in *studiolo* or *Kunstkammer* collections. These collections differed from the princely treasury in their imposition of a classificatory scheme upon their contents, no longer functioning simply as a means of enhancing the magnificence of their owners and now instead becoming a tool to organize and structure the new knowledge of the world that these accumulations of marvellous objects represented.[35]

The 1565 *Inscriptiones vel tituli theatre amplissimi* of Samuel Quiccheberg provides guidelines for assembling an ideal *Kunstkammer* collection. Quiccheberg's classification of objects into various classes is a veritable taxonomy of contemporary knowledge.[36] In particular, Quiccheberg defines two significant classes of object: *naturalia*, a category that included specimens of rare plants, minerals, and exotic animals; and *artefacta*, or *artificialia*, which encompassed man-made objects, often manufactured from rare or precious materials.[37] Porcelain could sit ambiguously in such collections as both *artificialia* and *naturalia* — a mounted porcelain vessel paralleled other examples of rare natural materials transformed by the addition of precious metal mounts, but porcelain itself was nevertheless understood to be a product of human manipulation of natural materials. This ambiguity was emphasized by a further category of objects found in such collections — *exotica*, consisting of ethnographica and artefacts from distant countries, and a category under which

32 Carboni, 'Vetri preziosi', pp. 183–94.
33 Canepa, *Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer*, pp. 145–47.
34 Findlen, *Possessing Nature*, p. 9.
35 Impey and MacGregor, eds, *The Origins of Museums*.
36 Quiccheberg, *The First Treatise on Museums: Samuel Quiccheberg's Inscriptiones*.
37 Eichberger, 'Naturalia', p. 20.

Figure 7.5. Plate, Chinese porcelain, Ming Dynasty, PA 1090, Innsbruck, Schloss Ambras. *c.* 1550–1600 © KHM-Museumsverband.

porcelain might be included. The inventory of the *Kunstkammer* collection of Archduke Ferdinand II of Tirol at Schloss Ambras, made on his death in 1595, lists sixteenth-century Chinese porcelain amongst other *exotica* from the Habsburg overseas realms (Fig. 7.5).[38]

Porcelain and the Secrets of Nature

Despite the rise of this new natural historical approach to the classification and display of rare and unusual materials, older, established traditions about porcelain and its properties persisted. Noted humanist scholar Julius Scaliger in his *Exotericarum exercitationum* of 1557 still reports of porcelain that 'it cannot bear poison, but breaks apart'.[39] Even in the seventeenth century, English polymath Thomas Browne in his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, first published in 1646, notes that some of the unique properties attributed to porcelain vessels include 'that they admit no poison'.[40] More significantly, early speculations about the method of porcelain's manufacture remained remarkably persistent. One of the earliest accounts of the making of porcelain to circulate widely in Europe is that found in the late thirteenth-century *Description of the World* attributed to Marco Polo. It is this text that gives us the term 'porcelain', a word deriving from the Italian *porcellana*, itself a derivative from the name of the *porcella*, or cowrie shell (genus *cypraea*).[41] On just one occasion, Polo

38 Belozerskaya, *Luxury Arts*, p. 25. Garner, *Chinese Export Art*, p. 17.
39 Scaliger, *Exotericarum exercitationum liber de subtilitate*, fol. 136r.
40 Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, book 2, chap. 5, no. 7, p. 98.
41 Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, II, pp. 805, 807–08.

uses the term *porcellana* to refer to vessels manufactured in the city of Tingiu, a site that has been associated with the great southern kiln complex of Dehua in Fujian province.[42] In a passage that is absent from the earliest redactions of the *Description*, we find an account of how these vessels were made of mud and rotten earth which was collected in great mounds and then exposed to the elements for a period of thirty or forty years. After this time, the transformed earth was fashioned into vessels that were an azure colour and possessed of great shine.[43] This narrative circulated widely in Europe in an Italian translation by the geographer Giovanni Battista Ramusio, published in his *Navigationi et viaggi* in 1559.[44] Although it bears no resemblance to the actual manufacturing processes of Chinese porcelain, the account of porcelain production contained in the later redactions of the Polo travelogue would profoundly influence European speculation about its fabrication and materiality. Once the name of the cowrie shell became associated with the Chinese ceramic, then the persistence of the supposition that shells were somehow employed in porcelain's creation became inevitable. The origins of the association were likely aesthetic; to European eyes smooth, glossy and translucent sea shells must have appeared similar to the glazed surfaces of Chinese porcelain. Significant too must have been the fact that the word porcelain continued to be used with the sense of sea shells throughout the early modern period. For example, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French, *porcelaine* was used to refer to shells and shell products; beads made from shell and referred to as 'porcelaine' were still being produced in Paris in the seventeenth century.[45]

By the early sixteenth century, the theory that shells were involved in the manufacture of porcelain was widespread in Europe. In the 1516 travelogue of the Portuguese India officer Duarte Barbosa, published in Ramusio's *Navigationi et Viaggi*, porcelain is said to be made from a paste of pulverized shells of sea snails and eggshells.[46] In his *Exotericarum exercitationum*, Scaliger asserted that porcelain was made from 'eggshells and the shell of umbilical shellfish (called porcelains, whence the name)' that were pounded into a paste and shaped into vases.[47] A similar account is given by the antiquary Guido Panciroli in his *Nova reperta sive rerum memorabilium* of 1602 where he describes the ingredients of porcelain as including 'a large mass of material composed of plaster, egg- and oyster-shell, of sea-locusts and similar creatures'.[48]

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42 Polo, *The Description of the World*, p. 265. Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, p. 157. Meicun and Zhang, 'A Chinese Porcelain Jar', pp. 39–56.

43 Gaunt, *Marco Polo's Le Devisement*, p. 12.

44 Yule, *The Book of ser Marco Polo*, vol II, p. 242.

45 Otto, 'This is that which … they call Wampum', pp. 1–36.

46 Barbosa, *Libre*, pp. 345–48.

47 'Ovorum putamina, et marinoru conchas umbilicorum (Porcellanae species horum sunt, unde et nomen)', Scaliger, *Exotericarum exercitationum liber de subtilitate*, pp. 135^{v}–36^{r}.

48 'Sunt autem massa quaedam, ex gypso, ovo trito, putamine locustae marinae, et alits speciebus composita', Panciroli, *Nova Reperta*, II, p. 141.

Many Europeans who had travelled to China issued correctives to these wild speculations about porcelain's formulation. The Portuguese Dominican Gaspar da Cruz, the Portuguese Jesuit missionary Alvaro Semedo, and the Dutch VOC employee Johan Nieuhoff all published accounts of porcelain production that suggest the material was made from a type of clay and was shaped and fired like other ceramics.[49] Nevertheless, Père Jean-Baptiste du Halde, Paris correspondent of the Jesuit missionaries in China, still felt obliged in his 1735 *Déscription geographique de l'empire de la Chine* to state:

> Some authors have said that it [porcelain] was made of egg shells, or the shells of certain fish buried in the earth for twenty or thirty, and even a hundred years; which is the pure invention of the writers.[50]

With the publication in 1717 of missionary Père Francois-Xavier d'Entrecolles's 1712 letter to Louis-Francois d'Orry, treasurer of the Jesuit missions to China and India, an accurate description of the materials and method for the manufacture of porcelain in Jingdezhen was available in Europe.[51] Further, at that point in time, successful experiments to produce a kaolinic porcelain had already been conducted in Dresden.[52] To understand the tenaciousness of the tradition associating shells with the fabrication of porcelain, we need to comprehend the epistemological conditions under which these connections were being proposed. Certainly, there were visual and haptic parallels to be drawn between shells and porcelain, readily borne out by handling and inspection of specimens of both. In addition, with the establishment of regular maritime communication between Europe and Asia in the sixteenth century, shells and Chinese porcelain were imported together on Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch ships, often then remaining together once they entered European collections. This shared provenance, argues art historian Anna Grasskamp, contributed to their enduring association.[53]

But more important, I argue, is the fact that, from the sixteenth century onwards, speculation about the nature of porcelain and its method of manufacture was the purview, not of ceramicists, but of natural historians dedicated to understanding the nature of the universe and the powers at play in it. It is through this lens that we need to view early European attempts to formulate a method to produce porcelain. Rather than approaching the investigation of porcelain from the perspective of the technicalities of ceramic manufacture, many of those who contemplated the nature of porcelain did so in the context of speculation focused upon understanding matter, the forces that governed its generation and transformation, and how these powers might be mastered

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49 Da Cruz, The Treatise of Fr Gaspar da Cruz', pp. 126–27. Semedo, *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China*, p. 12. Nieuhoff, *An Embassy*, p. 71.

50 Du Halde, *Description of the Empire*, I, p. 338.

51 *Lettres édifiantes*, X, pp. 365–76.

52 Pollard, 'Letters from China', pp. 57–58.

53 Grasskamp, 'Shells, Bodies', pp. 59–62.

by human agency. Many of those who pursued the knowledge to produce porcelain were practitioners of the alchemical arts, a form of applied natural philosophy. But other investigators approached the question from a more theoretical perspective, seeking to place porcelain in the context of broader speculation about the mineral world and its transformations. In the sixteenth century, when some of the more outlandish-seeming accounts of porcelain's fabrication were beginning to circulate, the older intellectual tradition of speculative induction, characterized by the work of Aristotle, and the new importance attached to direct experience as a pathway to knowledge, co-existed and interpenetrated. A leading sixteenth-century natural philosopher like Ulisse Aldrovandi could criticize Aristotle for not having personally verified the information he collected, yet often fail to heed his own advice, grounding his observations on the 'auctores canonici', intermingling scientific observation with encyclopedism.[54] Du Halde's repudiation in 1735 of the belief that shell formed an ingredient of porcelain demonstrates the extent to which the heritage of scholasticism lingered in natural philosophy even into the eighteenth century.

A key to understanding why the perceived material relationship between shells and porcelain was so longstanding lies in traditions of natural philosophical speculation that construed shells as sharing in the nature of stones.[55] This is an idea that had its origins in classical thought. Aristotle, in his *History of Animals*, had used shells as an example of his theory of spontaneous generation. According to him, shells could be generated by the sun warming up the mud on the seabed — a *creatio ex nihilo* which brought shelled molluscs to life out of inert earth.[56] Commenting on the nature of shells, the sixteenth-century French ceramicist and natural philosopher Bernard Palissy 'exalt[ed] mollusks as natural craftsmen who channel water and earth deposits in order to paint rainbows on their calcified shells'.[57] The process of petrification was central to the thought of Palissy who argued that the true secret of nature, the true Philosopher's Stone, lay in the realm of petrifaction, the transformation of living matter into stone, rather than in the transmutation of base metals into gold.[58] Palissy's ideas on the mineral nature of sea shells is echoed in the thinking of the seventeenth-century alchemist Jan Baptist van Helmont. In his *Dawn, or the new rise of medicine*, first published in 1644, van Helmont discusses the phenomenon of petrification, proposing that all things were made of water and that hidden internal qualities, *semina*, converted water into all other substances in nature. He specifically discusses the petrifying action of water in relation to shells, arguing that shells were transformed into stony material by the water in their environment.[59]

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54 Baucon, 'Ulisse Aldrovandi', p. 246; Olmi, *Ulisse Aldrovandi*, p. 128.
55 Acidini Luchinat, 'Rappresentazione'.
56 Aristotle, *History of Animals*, pp. 152–54.
57 Shell, 'Casting Life', p. 22.
58 Newman, *Promethean Ambitions*, pp. 145–46.
59 Van Helmont, *Dageraed*, p. 202. Newman and Principe, *Alchemy Tried in the Fire*, p. 63.

Sea shells were thus not only construed as mineral in nature; they were also a material that exemplified the process of petrification — of becoming stone. This characteristic takes on significance in the context of other features commonly encountered in early modern speculation about Chinese porcelain's physical origins. As well as conjecturing that shells were an ingredient of porcelain, early European traditions about its manufacture evoked natural philosophical theories concerning the subterranean fertility of the earth and the mineral realm. Subterranean generation and transformation of minerals were ideas with wide currency. The notion that metals, gemstones, and other minerals were fertile and grew, that they increased, and regenerated in the earth, is ultimately of classical origin, but such ideas gained renewed currency in various forms in the early modern period, continuing into the eighteenth century.[60] Already in the tenth century, highly developed theories of metallogenesis formulated in the Arab world had begun to circulate amongst scholars in Europe. The Dominican theologian and natural philosopher Albertus Magnus, in his *On Minerals* of around 1260 (but first printed in 1476), expanded upon these ideas, explaining how mineral vapours of sulphur and mercury, under the influence of the stars, percolated upwards through the cracks and fissures in the earth to gradually congeal, the different proportions and purities of the principles present condensing into various mineral substances.[61] In his *On the Origin and Cause of Subterranean Things* of 1546, physician and natural philosopher Georgius Agricola rejected the theory of metallic exhalations and the sulphur-mercury theory of metals, and instead returned to Aristotle's *Meteorology* and Theophrastus's *On Stones* to propose that all minerals were different combinations of water and earth. The qualities of heat and cold in the earth accounted for variation in metallogenesis, as subterranean heat mixed metallic substances and coldness solidified the mixture.[62]

The sixteenth century also saw the increasing importance of hylozoic ideas about mineral generation, proposing not only that metals and minerals were born beneath the earth, congealed from subterranean principles, but that they also grew and 'ripened' there as well, in an organismic process analogous to vegetable life. This view held that a base metal that remained underground in its natural state continued to be refined by natural processes towards the pure composition of gold — it matured and ripened in the womb of the earth.[63] Paracelsian alchemy of the sixteenth century proposed that metals and minerals grew underground in a process of 'vegetation', in the form of veins that formed the trunks and branches of vast subterranean trees.[64] And such beliefs remained current into the seventeenth century. The Huguenot chemist,

60 Halleux, 'Fécondité des mines'.
61 Principe, *The Secrets of Alchemy*, pp. 35–37. Dym, 'Alchemy and Mining', pp. 232–54.
62 Dym, 'Alchemy and Mining', pp. 237–38. Agricola, *Ausgewählte Werke*, III, p. 179.
63 'A Tract of Great Price', I, pp. 245–58. Norris, 'The Mineral Exhalation Theory', p. 54.
64 Newman, 'The Corpuscular Theory', p. 173. Newman, 'What Alchemists Knew', p. 45.

Nicaise Lefebvre, in his 1660 *Traicté de la Chymie*, notes that 'Minerals do live, as long as they are joined to their Matrix and Root' — that is, minerals live on as long as they are in their natural state in the earth.[65] Indeed, in his *Of Nature's Obvious Laws & Processes in Vegetation*, an unpublished treatise from *c.* 1671–1675, Isaac Newton discusses how 'metalline trees in the earth grew'.[66]

Such early modern speculations about subterranean mineral genesis and maturation form part of the intellectual *Umwelt* in which early modern European speculation about the nature of porcelain and its manufacture must be read. Of particular interest is the fact that the more fantastic theories regarding porcelain's creation reflect contemporary natural philosophical theories. For natural philosophers and alchemists, the notion that minerals and metals grew and transformed within the earth dovetailed seamlessly with the idea that shells were a material that became stony mineral through the action of natural processes and the passage of time. In turn, the petrification of shells readily led to the supposition that porcelain, a material which many speculated to contain shells as an essential ingredient, also underwent subterranean maturation and petrification. A regular feature of many early European accounts of porcelain manufacture was the construal of the material's creation in terms of natural processes, with raw materials being exposed to the elements, or buried in the earth. In the account of porcelain production contained in Ramusio's version of the *Description of the World*, the powers of nature and extended timeframes are invoked:

> And these bowls are made in this way […] of this kind of earth; namely that those of the city gather as from a mine mud and rotten earth and make great mounds of it, and leave them thus in the wind, in the rain, and in the sun, for thirty and forty years […] And then in this space of time the said earth being so long in those mounds is so worked up that the bowls made of it have the colour of azure, and they are very shining and most beautiful beyond measure. And you must know that when a man gathers that earth he does so for his sons or grandsons.[67]

Porcelain production is framed as a transformation of raw materials through the agency of natural forces — exposure of earth to sun, wind, and rain. The mention of mud and rotten earth clearly evokes natural philosophical theories of spontaneous generation. Aristotle's description of the spontaneous genesis of shellfish involved mud acted upon by the heat of the sun. Rotten matter was deemed particularly fecund, the putrefaction of particular types of matter giving rise to particular spontaneous growths.[68] Noteworthy in Ramusio's text is that the changes induced in porcelain's raw materials by exposure to

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65 Lefebvre, *A Compendious Body of Chemistry*, I, p. 62.
66 Newton, *Of Nature's Obvious Laws*.
67 Polo, *The Description of the World*, I, p. 352.
68 Newman, *Promethean Ambitions*, pp. 168–69.

moisture and heat take place on a timescale more akin to natural processes than the techniques of industry: the periods of time involved are generational in length, with the makers' children and grandchildren being the beneficiaries of their efforts. Extended timeframes for the creation of Chinese porcelain are also a feature of the 1516 travelogue by Barbosa:

> They take the shells of sea snails and eggshells and pulverize them and […] make a paste which they put under the earth to become refined for a space of eighty or a hundred years […] they then dig it out and work it into vases of various shapes, […] paint them, glaze them.[69]

Not only is shell stated to be a constituent ingredient, but a period of time more than the average human lifetime is required for the porcelain paste's refinement. The expansive timeframes in these descriptions of porcelain's creation emphasize the impression that we are dealing here with some natural process. This is further underscored by the inclusion in Barbosa's account of a trope that we find repeated in many early modern accounts of Chinese porcelain production — namely that porcelain was formed underneath the ground. Barbosa claims the raw materials are buried, only to be dug up and worked into vessels some decades later. This idea of porcelain's subterranean maturation had currency into the seventeenth century, as evidenced by Panciroli's 1602 account:

> It [porcelain paste] is then buried by the head of the family, who reveals the hiding place to one of his sons … It must remain in the ground for eighty years … After this time is elapsed, the heirs must take it from the ground, and use it to make […] beautiful translucent vases.[70]

Similarly, Browne writes in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* of 'Porcellane or Chyna dishes, that according to common beliefe […] are made of earth, which lyeth in preparation about an hundred yeares under ground'.[71]

But already in the mid-sixteenth century, even more radical claims about the subterranean generation of porcelain were appearing. The Italian polymath Girolamo Cardano, in his *De subtilitate rerum* of 1547, states that 'it is certain that porcelain is […] made of a particular juice which coalesces underground and is brought from the east'.[72] Here, Cardano evokes the notion already found in Pliny's *Natural History* and elaborated upon by Agricola, of lapidary liquids solidifying underground to form minerals — a process known

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69 Barbosa, *Libre*, I, p. 345[f], cited in West, 'Arab Sources', p. 67.

70 'Sub terra in locum aliquem secretiorem reconditur, quem pater liberis suis (alios enim hunc scire non vult) designat. Atque ibi octoginta annos manet recondita quo tempore elapso filii vel Nepotes eam eruunt eagrursum subacta, et ad elaborandum idonea reddita, pretiosa illa vasa consiciunt adspectu pulcherrima et tralucentia', Panciroli, *Nova Reperta*, II, pp. 141–44.

71 Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, book 2, chap. 5, no. 7, p. 97.

72 Cardano, *De subtilitate*, fols 100[v]–101[r].

as congelation.[73] In the sixteenth century, congelation was a key element in speculation concerning processes of petrification and the formation of minerals. The term referred to the solidification of a substance which had been liquified through the application of heat.[74] Cardano here clearly frames the formation of porcelain as a natural subterranean process. This idea is echoed in the writing of Scaliger, who, as we have seen, proposed that porcelain was made from a paste of sea shells, modelled into vases and then buried. In accord with the tradition found in Barbosa, they were brought to completion in a maturation process that was longer than a human lifespan, being dug up after one hundred years and then put up for sale.[75] Scaliger describes porcelain's creation as a natural subterranean transformation that echoes widely held sixteenth-century beliefs about the formation of minerals in the bowels of the earth. Vessels formed of a porcelain paste are buried underground and when dug up after the appointed period have been transformed into finished porcelains.

Scholasticism in Dresden? Porcelain as a European Artefact

Such learned conjectures about the nature of porcelain, and construal of its production as a quasi-natural process, undoubtedly seem outlandish from a contemporary perspective. It is clear that scholars like Cardano and Scaliger were attempting to understand porcelain through the lens of established natural philosophical speculations about the nature of the mineral realm and the generative processes at play in the bowels of the earth. It seems very likely that these theories were influenced by a pre-existing tendency to construe porcelain as a type of mineral that was already evidenced in the treatment of porcelain objects in late medieval treasury collections, where the material was grouped with precious hardstone vessels and embellished with elaborate mounts. What is clear here is the scholastic character of the hypothesizing of these natural historians. Cardano and Scaliger wrote at a time when Chinese porcelain was nowhere near the rarity in Europe that it had been in the fifteenth century, and despite the epistemological shift toward a model of knowledge generation based upon personal observation and experience in the context of the museum collection, their conjectures about the nature and method of fabrication of Chinese porcelain appear based almost exclusively on existing natural philosophical literature. When a European kaolinic porcelain was finally achieved in Dresden in 1708, the context in which this breakthrough was made could not seem more different to the world of scholastic speculation of these earlier writers. Ehrenfried Walther

73 Plin. *Nat.* 36.45.
74 Schnapper, *Le géant*, p. 18.
75 Scaliger, *Exotericarum exercitationum liber de subtilitate*, fols 135^{v}–36^{r}.

Figure 7.6. Meissen, Teapot, Böttger stoneware (Jaspisporcelain), Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C.274&A-1921, *c.* 1710–1715. © V&A Museum, London.

von Tschirnhaus, the scholar leading the Saxon court's efforts to discover the secret of porcelain production, was a member of the French Royal Academy of Sciences, a mathematician, physician, and philosopher. A committed experimentalist who had established a glassworks in Dresden, his work with high-temperature burning lenses was critical to the success of the porcelain enterprise.[76] Von Tschirnhaus's co-experimentalist, Johann Friedrich Böttger, was an apothecary and an alchemist who was first brought to the Saxon court in November 1701 to pursue the production of gold.[77] The Dresden porcelain project was, thus, from the outset pursued by accomplished technicians in the context of the laboratory. Although the Saxon Elector Augustus the Strong's self-confessed 'maladie de porcelaine' was to manifest itself fully only later in the 1720s when he would, through regular purchases via agents in Paris and Amsterdam, assemble one of the largest collections of Asian porcelain in all of Europe, there were nevertheless examples of the Chinese ceramics that the experimentalists sought to emulate on hand in Dresden for inspection.[78]

Yet it would be a mistake to assume that there was no connection between the experimental programme pursued in Dresden and the speculations of the earlier sixteenth-century natural historians. Despite the far more practical focus of the Saxon experimentalists, the intellectual traditions that underpinned the work of Von Tschirnhaus and Böttger were continuous with those of the earlier scholars. In particular, the emulation and manipulation of natural processes to generate a mineral substance were alchemical concepts very much at the centre of the enterprise pursued in Dresden at the turn of the eighteenth century. When in around 1706, in the course of experiments in pursuit of a porcelain formula, Böttger and Von Tschirnhaus achieved a high-fired red stoneware inspired by Chinese *Yixing* wares in the Royal collection, it was dubbed *Jaspisporcelain* (jasper porcelain). Its principal ingredient was red bolus or 'Nuremburg earth', an iron-rich red clay that since the sixteenth century was

76 Schönfeld, 'Was there a Western Inventor of Porcelain?'.
77 Bothe, 'Johann Friedrich Böttger', pp. 12–16.
78 Syndram, 'Jasper Porcelain', pp. 58–59.

believed to possess healing properties and was taken medicinally in pill-form in the eighteenth century. Böttger, an apothecary, would no doubt have been familiar with this material, a mineral that Rudolph II's personal physician, Johannes Scultetus Montanus had identified as *axungia auri* (gold fat) — gold transformed by the influence of the sun.[79] The red bolus not only had alchemical transmutational associations; it naturally occurred as veins in the volcanic rock in which jasper was found. It is highly likely that the alchemist Böttger believed that, in achieving the *Jaspisporcelain*, he had succeeded in the transmutation of the bolus into an artificial jasper by emulating the natural forces at play in the earth — sealing the material in a kiln and exposing it to extremely high temperatures.[80] Furthermore, the completed *Jaspisporcelain* was subjected to grinding, polishing, cutting, and engraving like a hardstone — something impossible with other European ceramic bodies — creating artworks to which Augustus gave pride of place within his *pretiosen* collection in the Green Vaults (Fig. 7.6).[81] It is also highly likely, as Miriam Bothe suggests, that success in producing *Jaspisporcelain* led the experimentalists to realize that they needed to identify a white clay that otherwise possessed the technical properties of the Nuremburg bolus in order to achieve a white porcelain like that of the Chinese.[82] These efforts would eventually lead to the use of a kaolin-bearing white Colditz clay in 1708, resulting in the transmutation of raw earth into the long-sought-after 'white gold'.[83]

The legacy of the sixteenth-century natural historians, with their lingering heritage of scholasticism, clearly shaped the Dresden porcelain project, something that is perhaps not surprising when we remember that Böttger was an alchemist who throughout his life pursued chrysopoetic experimentation. What is striking is the robust persistence of these natural philosophical speculations about the nature of porcelain in the face of increasing access to imported examples of Chinese porcelain in Europe, and first-hand accounts by travellers in China describing the ceramic industry at Jingdezhen. Even more striking is the fact that 'pre-scientific' ideas about the nature of minerals and the processes of generation at play in the earth could contribute to technological progress, as they did in Dresden. Just as, in the sixteenth century, the older intellectual tradition of speculative induction and the new empirical path to knowledge co-existed, at the turn of the eighteenth century, natural philosophy and nascent Enlightenment knowledge interpenetrated. As Stacey Pierson suggests, although porcelain travelled to Europe from China, it was, from the moment of its arrival in Europe, a 'European' artefact, its use, signification, even the very nature of its materiality, subsumed into European intellectual and cultural frameworks.

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79 Horschik, 'Die deutschen Terra-Sigillata-Gefässe', p. 13.
80 Horschik, 'Die deutschen Terra-Sigillata-Gefässe', p. 16.
81 Syndram and Weinhold, eds, *Böttger Stoneware*.
82 Bothe, 'Johann Friedrich Böttger', p. 22.
83 Pietsch and Ufer, *Mythos Meissen*, pp. 20–26.

ABSTRACT Early modern European speculation about the wondrous nature of Chinese porcelain gave rise to several outlandish claims about the material, including the use of seashells as an ingredient in its manufacture, and the need to bury porcelain vessels to bring them to completion. Rather than being simple flights of fantasy, this essay suggests that these ideas are a logical development from the belief that porcelain was a form of mineral, already evident in the treatment of porcelain objects in late medieval princely collections. Many eccentric ideas about porcelain's material nature and fabrication are shown to be compatible with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century natural historical speculation about the subterranean genesis of minerals in the earth. These speculations remained current into the early eighteenth century and likely informed the experimentation that resulted in a European kaolinic porcelain in Dresden in 1708.

KEYWORDS Porcelain, natural history, *Kunstkammer*, seashells, alchemy, Girolamo Cardano, Julius Caesar Scaliger

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LEONARDO ROSSI

Life and Afterlife of Religious Bodies

From Organic Matters to Devotional Objects: Corpses on Display in Late Modern Italy (c. 1800–1950)

Post-Mortem Life of Special Corpses: A Brief Introduction

Not all bodies rest in peace after death. The kidnapped, disappeared, or vilified bodies of some actors, international celebrities, or political leaders demonstrate this (such as those of Charlie Chaplin, Eva Peron, and Benito Mussolini).[1] Others are embalmed, exhumed, displayed in glass cases and taken on pilgrimages (like those of popes and saints).[2] A famous example is Thérèse Martin (1873–1897), the Carmelite saint of the 'little way'. Her mortal remains do not rest in Lisieux but since 1995 they have travelled thousands of kilometres around the globe, 'touching' over seventy nations and 'meeting' millions of devotees.[3] Tilson and Chao carefully studied the promotional campaign organized by the Carmelite Order in the United States (1999–2000), asserting the importance and innovation of this tour.[4] Among the most relevant elements of the saint's journey towards the faithful (and not vice versa as is common practice), they highlighted the strategic

* The results presented in this chapter are the outcome of the research conducted for 'Contested Bodies: The Religious Lives of Corpses', a Belgian–Swiss project funded by FWO/SNF (PI: Tine Van Osselaer).

1 Richardson, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute*, chapters 6 and 7; Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies*, ch. 4. On the post-mortem of famous people: Foltyn, 'Dead Famous', pp. 156–63.

2 Corbin, 'L'Emprise de la religion', pp. 51–83.

3 *Welcome to St. Thérèse* (1999). The relics of the saint and those of her parents (Louis and Zélie Martin) are still devoutly carried to various countries by the Carmelite order. For an updated tour agenda: <https://www.therese-de-lisieux.catholique.fr/it/evenements-actualites/voyages-des-reliques/> [accessed December 2022].

4 Tilson and Chao, 'Saintly Campaigning', pp. 86–90.

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Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean, ed. by Beatrice Falcucci, Emanuele Giusti, and Davide Trentacoste, HIMO 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2024), pp. 231–254
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use of the relics by the clergy to re-establish relationships with believers, and the interest still present in contemporary society for 'devotional and religious mysticism'.[5]

Despite its importance, Thérèse of Lisieux's case is not isolated. More than one hundred and fifty years earlier, the Discalced Carmelites of Lebanon asked Cardinal Carlo Odescalchi, vicar of the diocese of Rome, for the permission to be granted for two '*corpisanti* [holy bodies] to be exhibited in the mission churches of their order'.[6] Even in those circumstances, the aim was to support 'the devotion of good Catholics [of Tripoli]' and to evangelize a land 'surrounded by infidels' through the display of precious relics, *mutatis mutandis* dynamics very similar to those identifiable in the tour of the French saint.[7] Following the centuries-old and uninterrupted Christian tradition, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sacred bodies and objects travelled within the Catholic world playing a crucial role in devotional practices and establishing privileged relationships between the central clergy (Roman Church) and local communities. Which bodies were selected for this mission? Why did some corpses acquire (or continue to have) relevance after death and others not? Who assigned religious significance to them and how was this done?

This article aims not to analyse the theological and semiotic debate on the nature of relics but to investigate the dynamics that led to the transformation of mortal remains into devotional objects, from corpses to relics. Given the vastness of the field of investigation, I have decided to focus on specific categories that satisfy four criteria. (1) First of all, I will consider entire bodies (or human-shaped reliquaries) and not portions of them (such as hands, organs, teeth) or furnishings (such as fragments of relics, clothes, coffins, and funerary objects). Among the numerous reasons for this choice, mention is made of the fact that while relics and body portions have received abundant consideration from scholarship, little has been done on (whole) bodies, particularly those with religious significance.[8] Furthermore, the integrity of the corpse (and not its shattering) was perceived as a crucial characteristic by the faithful for constructing the mystical phenomenon of the incorruption. (2) In line with the praxeological approach of the book based on 'rereading,

5 Quotation from: Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 3.

6 'due corpi santi per esporli in chiese della missione del loro ordine'. Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, v, vol. 81, 5^{r}.

7 'la devozione dei buoni cattolici [di Tripoli]', 'circondati dagli infedeli'. Both quotations in: Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, v, vol. 81, 5^{r}.

8 In recent years, scholars of political material culture and the political use of human remains have drawn attention to the public and symbolic dimension of leaders' bodies. See, for example: Johnson, 'Why Dead Bodies Talk', pp. 1–26; Walsham, 'Introduction', pp. 24–30; Cavicchioli and Provero, 'Introduction', pp. 1–7.

reshaping, repurposing the object',[9] the public display of these bodies in churches, sanctuaries, and monasteries is a discriminating element for my research as it demonstrates the passage of perception from organic substance to relic-object, worthy of veneration, and the existence of devout practices around it. (3) I considered as geographical context the lands that correspond to modern Italy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a period for which the exposed bodies with religious significance have not yet received a thorough investigation, at least as a whole category. Historians have dealt comprehensively with this theme for the Middle Ages and the early modern period, as demonstrated by the investigations conducted on the bodies of popes, saints, and mystics.[10] As regards the last two centuries, scholarship has paid attention to individual case studies (e.g., the troubled fate of Pius IX's body and the interventions performed on that of Padre Pio)[11] or phenomena such as the corruption of the flesh,[12] and the dissemination of reliquary-sculptures of early Christian martyrs, focusing above all on the instrumentalization of the devotion promoted by the Roman curia and its attempt to reinforce its authority through the promotion of the cults (bottom-up perspective).[13] (4) On the contrary, from a methodological point of view, I aim to look at the perception of the faithful, at how they have — also in cooperation with religious and secular authorities — developed practices and rituals around specific corpses, investing them with religious meanings and transforming them into relics. In this way, I do not intend to exclude institutional recognition of these bodies but rather to broaden the perspective and include believers, seen not only as users of a service built by the other institutions but as playing an active part in the construction and definition of dynamics and perceptions.

Given the criteria and the methodological approach chosen, there are two categories of bodies with religious significance on which I will focus: the corpses of heroes of the faith deemed free of decay and the human-shaped simulacra of early Christian martyrs. Both categories satisfy the conditions mentioned above: they are entire bodies, publicly displayed in glass cases, particularly widespread in late modern Italy (and beyond), and requested by local communities eager to possess their relics. In the following pages, I will analyse these four aspects in more detail, but first it is necessary to answer a question: who were those bodies?

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9 See the introduction of this book, pp. 13–15.

10 Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead* and Dinzelbacher, *Körper und Frömmigkeit*.

11 Cannone, *Il papa scomodo*, pp. 100–32; Kertzer, *The Pope Who Would be King*, pp. 319–20 and 334–45; Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, pp. 107, 194; and Rossi, '"Pius Nono est mort, mais le Pape ne meurt jamais"'.

12 Thurston, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*, pp. 233–44 and Cruz, *The Incorruptibles*.

13 Boutry and others, *Reliques modernes*, pp. 975–30; Ghilardi, 'Sub terris Roma', pp. 157–87.

Bodies with Religious Significance: Incorruptibles and Early Christian Martyrs

The first is the category defined by Joan Carroll Cruz as 'incorruptibles'.[14] They are bodies of people who died with a reputation for holiness (such as founders of institutions or orders, mystics, and saints-to-be) considered to be prodigious and, for this reason, exposed to public devotion. For Herbert Thurston, the miraculous post-mortem corporeal phenomena are the absence of corruption and *rigor mortis*, the flexibility and freshness of the limbs and the emission of perfumed oils or liquids.[15] Usually, these exceptional marvels were discovered immediately after death or following procedures such as exhumations, canonical recognitions (*recognitio*), and transfers (*translatio*) of the remains. Scholars have argued that mystical incorruption is a long-lasting phenomenon that had its origins already in the early Christian centuries.[16] However, this prodigy and the practices developed around it (e.g., the display of remains and the embellishment of their appearance) seemed to take on specific connotations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[17] Among the innovative aspects of that period we can list: the exponential rise of cases, the particular biographical profile of the bodies during their lifetime and the request from below (that is, local communities) for the possession and custody of their remains (we will see these aspects in more detail later on).[18] In this article, I will not deal with the phenomenon of incorruption itself or enter into the debate on the nature of their conservation (natural, environmental, divine causes, fraud)[19] but I will analyse how religious and local communities perceived as prodigious the *incorruptibles* who died in late modernity.

The second category consists of reliquary-sculptures of (alleged) martyrs from the Roman catacombs discovered through archaeological excavations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Historians have not yet found an agreement on the terminology to use in defining these bodies (in this article, I will call them simulacra, reliquary-sculptures, or effigies) but it is essential to distinguish them from the so-called *corpisanti* (holy bodies), i.e.

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14 For a definition of *incorruptibles*: Cruz, *The Incorruptibles*, p. xxvii.

15 Thurston, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*, pp. 233–34.

16 E.g., see the list of Cruz: Cruz, *The Incorruptibles*, pp. vii–x.

17 Corbin, 'L'Emprise de la religion', pp. 75–76.

18 Cruz counted 102 incorruptibles in almost two thousand years of Christian history and, although her work dates back to the 1970s, it continues to be a starting point for those wishing to study religious bodies free of corruption. Starting from the list made by Cruz and integrating the most recent scientific production and an abundant consultation of archival sources, Andrea Pezzini and I have recorded 155 (and counting) cases of alleged post-mortem corporeal phenomena in Italy between *c.* 1750–1950. 46% of these belonged to founders and foundresses of new religious congregations and it was precisely the communities established by them that claimed possession, conservation, and exposure of the corpses of the founding saints.

19 Bouley, 'Negotiated Sanctity', pp. 12–23.

those bones of martyrs embellished with gems and diamonds typical of the late sixteenth century.[20] Once again, a significant turning point occurred in late modernity. Starting from the end of the eighteenth century, the practice of creating statues with a realistic human shape spread. They were no longer skeletons but looked like corpses that had just passed away. Massimiliano Ghilardi identified St Felicissima, made by the workshop of Antonio Magnani in 1772, as the first wax model.[21] The success of this new type of devotional object, *à l'italienne* ('Italian style'),[22] immediately obtained the consensus of the believers. While the previously pious faithful from all over the world used to address petitions to the Holy See (in particular, to the cardinal vicar or the guardian of the sacred relics, i.e. the persons responsible for the management of the Roman relics) to obtain the dust and bones of martyrs, from the end of the eighteenth century and especially in the following century, the ceroplastic simulacra became the new 'must-haves'.[23] Even the reliquary-sculptures of martyrs, like the uncorrupted bodies of contemporary saints, were exhibited in crystal cases.[24]

By studying these two categories, I have traced four fundamental phases in the passage from human remains into devotional objects: request for the body by the community; appropriation and (re)signification; devotional practices and interaction relationships; and replicability of the model.

Requesting a/that Body: Two Different Scenarios

According to the Roman Church there is no doubt. Invoking and venerating saints and their relics is good practice. However, the *Codex iuris canonici* (1917) clarifies some essential points: their cult is of '*dualia*', i.e. consisting of veneration and non-adoration (*latria*) — the latter being reserved only to the Lord — and can be addressed exclusively to officially recognized saints or to the blessed and servants of God (whose canonization process is still ongoing) approved by the pontiff.[25] In essence, the bodies and relics of saints are intrinsically linked to the Holy See and its decisions: the clergy manages the fabrication of sanctity and the approval of the relics through a particular document called 'autentica'.[26] But what is the situation beyond the Vatican's

20 On the different terminology: Sánchez Reyes and others, 'Sanctity Via the Light of Science', p. 142 and Budzyński and others, "Baltic Catacombs", p. 15 n. 88.

21 Ghilardi, 'Antonio Magnani', p. 59.

22 Expression used by Tine Van Osselaer in: Van Osselaer, 'Martyrs "à l'Italienne"'.

23 Boutry, *Les Saints des Catacombes*, pp. 888–90.

24 Budzyński and others, "Baltic Catacombs", p. 28.

25 *Codex iuris canonici* (1917), Can. 1276 and 1277, pp. 368–69.

26 The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints keeps this tradition alive as evidenced by the Vatican document *Relics in the Church: Authenticity and Conservation* (2017), especially article 23: <http://www.causesanti.va/it/documenti/le-reliquie-nella-chiesa-autenticita-e-conservazione.html> [accessed December 2022].

wishes? Alexandra Walsham argues that 'it would be inappropriate to insist upon a single or precise definition of the term "relic"'.[27] The impossibility of providing an exclusive definition is given by the contextual value of relics, which are 'locally and culturally determined and historically contingent'. Paul Gillingham insists on the historical, cultural, and social construction of the meaning of a relic and the importance of the faithful's perception, stating that 'relichood lies in the eyes of the beholder'.[28] The viewer chooses which meanings to attribute (and which not) to an object, and it does not have an intrinsic transcendent value. The developments of scholarship have made it possible to consider saints, bodies, and relics in a de-institutionalized context, where decision-making power does not depend only on the leaders in power but is a dialogical process between different actors.[29] Among the various voices in the chorus, I am investigating the *vox populi*: how and why did believers attribute a religious significance to particular bodies, transforming them into relics?

If we limited ourselves to examining only the top-down aspect, we would answer this question incompletely. Bodies of saints officially recognized by the Church, although technically relics, have not aroused particular interest among the faithful. On the contrary, these people can develop practices, beliefs, and cults regarding human remains of not — yet — approved figures. As demonstrated by Peter Brown and Andrew Louth, there is a substantial difference between the terms *sanctity* and *holiness*.[30] The first means the codified definition given by the Roman curia, while the second expresses the *sensum fidei*, i.e. the opinion of believers in determined contexts and historical periods. This revolutionary distinction has allowed scholars such as Gabriella Zarri and Anne Jacobson Schutte to speak of 'sante vive' or 'living saints', that is living people considered by contemporaries worthy of veneration without any ecclesiastical recognition.[31] Several reasons could guarantee this status: charismatic leadership, the foundation of new religious orders, prophetic or thaumaturgical abilities, and exceptional mystical gifts (ecstasies, visions, and stigmata). When the *fama sanctitatis* of these 'living saints' continued until their death (for many, it was only temporary and cut short by the intervention of the curial authorities), the event was seen as a significant moment by the faithful, eager to find other proofs or miracles. Furthermore, the local community could ask the civil and religious authorities to exhume human remains and bring them inside a church or mother house either with the purpose of keeping 'alive' the relationship with the dead body or if it was considered prodigious (free of decay or miraculous). This is what we could define as the first possible scenario: the community needing to possess a

27 Walsham, 'Introduction', p. 11.
28 Gillingham, 'The Strange Business of Memory', p. 206.
29 Caciola, 'Through a Glass', pp. 303–04.
30 Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man', pp. 81–82 and Louth, 'Holiness and Sanctity', p. 12.
31 Zarri, *Le Sante vive* and Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*.

specific body as a material and symbolic legacy of a specific person. As defined by Pierre Nora, the corpse is a *lieu de mémoire*,[32] 'a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community'.[33] Before creating devotional beliefs and practices that lead to the transformation of a body into a relic, the community needed to claim a corpse on which to develop these social processes. Some case studies can better clarify these dynamics.

Paola Frassinetti (1809–1882) founded the Sisters of St Dorothea in 1834 to provide for the education of poor girls. The institute immediately gained great popularity and Pope Gregory XVI entrusted her with spreading the order in the Papal States. When the foundress died, numerous houses had already been founded in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. A few years after her death, the sisters expressed the desire to transport her remains from the Verano cemetery, where they had been buried, to the motherhouse. The goal was twofold. On the one hand, they wanted to protect her corpse since it constituted an important element in the cause of canonization. On the other, they were keeping her charisma alive through the presence of her body within the convent walls (Lainer-Vos and Parigi would call this practice 'preservation of charisma' through mortal remains).[34] As can be seen from the documents in the Archive of St Dorothea, the nuns made contact with religious and secular authorities.[35] Finally, twenty-one years after her death, the first recognition of the body took place.[36]

The *modus operandi* of the Sisters of St Dorothea is not isolated, rather it was the practice performed by religious and local communities when they wanted to obtain the remains of a specific person, especially those of the founders. The *Décret impérial sur les sépultures* (1804) stipulated that in all domains under Napoleonic influence, the deceased should be buried outside the city walls, and in public cemeteries.[37] The provision ended the tradition of burying religious members or those who had died with a reputation for sanctity in privileged places such as churches and chapels, at least until the corpse ceased to be considered by civil law as an organic body and therefore subject to its protection. When the foundress of the Handmaids of Charity and future saint Maria Crocifissa di Rosa (1813–1855) died, her coffin was taken to the municipal cemetery of Brescia (Fig. 8.1). Only seven days after her departure, the sisters wrote to the bishop asking him to arrange for the rapid transport of the body within the motherhouse. Emotional reasons dictated their aspirations, combined with the will to possess her prodigious body.[38] During the wake, it was exposed to public devotion, and everybody

32 Nora, *Rethinking France*, I, p. xvii.
33 Gillingham, 'The Strange Business of Memory', p. 202.
34 Lainer-Vos and Parigi, 'Miracle Making', pp. 459–62.
35 Rome, ACSSDF, *Relazione della prima ricognizione*, fol. 1r.
36 Rome, ACSSDF, *Relazione della prima ricognizione*, fol. 3r.
37 *Bulletin des lois de la République française* (1804), pp. 75–80.
38 Brescia, ASDBs, *Processus Super Virtutibus*, p. 138.

Figure 8.1. Reliquary-body of St Maria Crocifissa di Rosa. Archivio storico diocesano di Brescia, Exuviarum recognitio canonice, Brescia, 1940, c. 115. Reproduced with the permission of the ASDBs.

attested to the presence of perfume, to the absence of any corruption, and — according to the nuns — it caused miracles. For the Handmaids these were further signs of her divine election, even after her death. The bishop, Msgr. Girolamo Verzeri, wrote the first letter to Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria on 22 December 1855, begging him to fulfil the requests of the nuns.[39]

The Sisters of St Dorothea in Rome and the Handmaids of Charity in Brescia knew what they wanted: the bodies of their foundresses. In other circumstances, however, the faithful or local communities requested human remains that belonged not to a specific person but to a particular category of religious bodies, that is the early Christian martyrs removed from the Roman catacombs. This is the second scenario. The investigations carried out by Philippe Boutry and Massimiliano Ghilardi offer fundamental explanations for these practices. With the apostolic brief *Ex commissae*, in 1672 Pope Clement X established the office of the 'Guardian of Relics' (*Custos Reliquiarum*), depended on the Cardinal Vicar of Rome and tasked with extracting, conserving, and distributing the remains from the catacombs.[40] He directed the group of excavators (about 8–10 people) who, every year from 2 November to 26 May, carried out excavation campaigns in search of early Christian martyrs. After taking out the bodies, it was up to the guardian to supervise their transformation into holy bodies and their distribution to the faithful who requested these precious objects. According to Ghilardi, 'it is impossible, also due to the fragmentary nature of the preserved documentation,

39 Brescia, ASDBs, Rel. 14, fols 11^{v}–12^{r}.

40 Ghilardi, 'Il custode', p. 175.

to carry out a complete and reliable census of the holy bodies clothed and consigned by the Custody'.[41]

However, 'it is not difficult to guess that *corpisanti* in ceroplastic [...] overwhelmingly invaded the market of the devotion of the *orbis christianus* experiencing an almost ubiquitous diffusion, from the centre of Christianity to the most remote lands of new conversion'.[42] For Boutry, between 2,400 and 2,500 simulacra were produced and distributed in the first half of the nineteenth century.[43] It is interesting to underline here that the faithful who wrote to the vicar begging him to receive the privilege of having the body of a martyr did so for numerous reasons. As scholars have argued, possessing a martyr meant they showed that they had a privileged relationship with Rome, which therefore demonstrated their prestige.[44] However, the devotional aspects should not be underestimated. Many faithful recognized the sacredness and heroism of the martyrs' remains, recalling their death to defend the faith and inspiring modern society to participate more actively in religious life. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for these relics to be considered miraculous and healing. Local communities were willing to pay considerable sums to obtain the wax model of a martyr, demonstrating how important the possession of a corpse and the material dimension of holiness were in late modernity.

Appropriation and Re-signification: From an Organic Body to a Relic

Obtaining custody of a body from the authorities was no easy feat. Once again, the example of Paola Frassinetti helps demonstrate this. As we have seen, the first recognition occurred on 12 March 1903. Doctor Gualdi, head of the Health Department in charge of exhumation, declared that 'the body was perfectly preserved and intact, even if the face was a dark wood colour and the hands were lighter but stripped of skin'.[45] For the nuns, it was undoubtedly a prodigious fact, proof that confirmed the exceptional nature of the foundress; but the head of the public cemetery stated that 'the remains are still in a phase of putrefaction, so the corpse cannot leave the graveyard'.[46] Despite the heated protests of the sisters, the body was put back in the coffin and only three years later they arranged the second recognition (on 24 February 1906). Even in that case, 'the body for the goodness of the Lord [was found] perfectly intact'.[47] However, on that occasion, a decisive change occurred in

41 Ghilardi, 'Il custode', p. 201.
42 Ghilardi, 'Il custode', p. 202.
43 Boutry, *Les Saints des Catacombes*, p. 887.
44 Ghilardi, 'La fabbrica dei martiri', p. 342.
45 Rome, ACSSDF, *Relazione della prima ricognizione*, fol. 3r.
46 Rome, ACSSDF, *Relazione della prima ricognizione*, fol. 4r.
47 Rome, ACSSDF, *Notizie sulla Salma*, p. 3.

the perception of her. Doctors and specialists agreed that 'her human remains are to be considered a real inorganic substance and no longer a corpse'. From a legal point of view, 'since it is no longer a real corpse, there is no reason to observe those provisions prescribed by the Mortuary Police regulations for the burial'.[48] The prefect of Rome declared Frassinetti's body an inorganic object no longer subject to Article 72 of the Mortuary Police Regulations (25 July 1892), so it could leave the cemetery to be transported to the congregation she had founded.

This passage marks the fundamental step in the shift of both responsibility and perception. For the secular authorities, Frassinetti was simply one of the many dead buried in the Verano cemetery and their task was to ensure that her body — like any other person — was not desecrated. On the contrary, for the nuns, that dead body embodied a multiplicity of meanings ('hypersignified'):[49] it proved the divine election of the foundress, encapsulated her charism, and conferred legitimacy and continuation on the new foundation. Finally, leaving the public cemetery and entering the motherhouse marked a significant turning point in the post-mortem story of the future saint. From the sources preserved in the St Dorothea archive, we know that as soon as the foundress's body arrived at the new venue, the procedures for the 'reappropriation' of the body immediately began and the whole community of sisters intervened. The body was undressed and the clothes and all the objects inside the coffin were disinfected to be sealed and kept as second-degree relics (i.e., those objects that have been in direct contact with the saint). The nuns washed the corpse and attested to the flesh's incorruption and flexibility with written reports and photographs. Their goal was to document the miracle with evidence for future generations and for this reason, they also asked Dr Tito Gualdi for help in carrying out conservation operations with the hope that 'the body would remain incorrupt indefinitely'.[50] Numerous chemical treatments were performed. It was immersed for three months in an antiseptic liquid. Later it was washed, exposed to the open air, subjected to various procedures and always treated with the utmost reverence.[51]

In addition to the technical aspects, it is important to underline the community and the ritual nature of these practices. As mentioned, the sisters took an active part. Some took care of the body, others sewed the new clothes, yet others prepared the funeral furnishings for the new tomb. Furthermore, the nuns carried Paola inside the convent in a procession, a way of recreating the dynamics that existed when the foundress was alive. From the sources, we read that the community used to pray with her, invoke her intercession,

48 Rome, ACSSDF, Letter from the Prefect of Rome to the Mother Superior, 24 February 1906, unnumbered page.

49 Tarlow and Battel Lowman, *Harnessing the Power*, p. 20.

50 Rome, ACSSDF, *Seconda ricognizione*, fol. 10^{r}.

51 Rome, ACSSDF, *Seconda ricognizione*, fols 5^{v} and 13^{r}.

chat, and ask for her help. It was as if Paola continued to live again within the convent walls through her body. This special relationship not only lasted during the months when the body was left out of the coffin but continued even when she was reburied. The pope allowed her body to be buried 'above ground', and the nuns ordered a crystal case so that they could still see her precious body. Although Frassinetti had not then been officially recognized as a saint, she and her corpse enjoyed the utmost respect from the local religious community.

The dynamics of social and devotional appropriation can also be seen in the case of the martyrs' bones. Compared to the incorrupt bodies — for which we generally have a massive amount of documentation — we do not have much information about them. Nevertheless, we can reconstruct interesting aspects for our analyses. First of all, in the requests sent to the cardinal vicar (or the guardian) we can read not only the reasons that prompted the faithful to request these relics but also discover what they wanted. In rare cases, they asked for relics that belonged to a specific martyr. For example, the inhabitants of Farindola (a municipality in the province of Pescara) aspired to the simulacrum of a martyr named Quirico, as they intended to renovate the old church dedicated to him and wished to possess the remains of the patron saint.[52] Other times, people asked for a martyr distinguished by gender, age, or biographical profile. For example, a priest and director of a youth oratory in Brescia wrote to the *custos* to have the body of a figure suitable for the devotion of the youngest. For this need, he sent the reliquary-sculpture of St Modestino, a child martyr.[53] In most cases, however, the request was for a body with a proper name (*nomine proprio*) or for a 'baptized' saint. In the first case, the martyrs' bodies had been found with inscriptions attesting to their names and possibly the cause of their martyrdom, the vessel of blood (*ampullae sanguinis*)[54] and frescoes.[55] In the second, however, the name of the martyrs was not known but there was no doubt about their sanctity, at least until the mid-nineteenth century, when the debate on the martyrs of the catacombs and the methods of removing their bones became highly debated and controversial topics.

In addition to supervising the research for the martyrs and their exhumation, the relics' guardian presided over the cleaning, recomposing, and embellishing of these bodies. As with uncorrupted bodies, these procedures transformed bones and organic fragments into human-like relics. These operations took place in Rome, making the city a hothouse specialized in the 'fabrication of material holiness'. Here wax models were produced in large quantities and Massimiliano Ghilardi spoke of 'serial production' and even

52 Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, IV, vol. 80, fol. 7^{r}.
53 Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, IV, vol. 80, fols 253^{r}–54^{v}.
54 Ghilardi, 'Il custode', p. 192.
55 Boutry, *Les Saints des Catacombes*, p. 876.

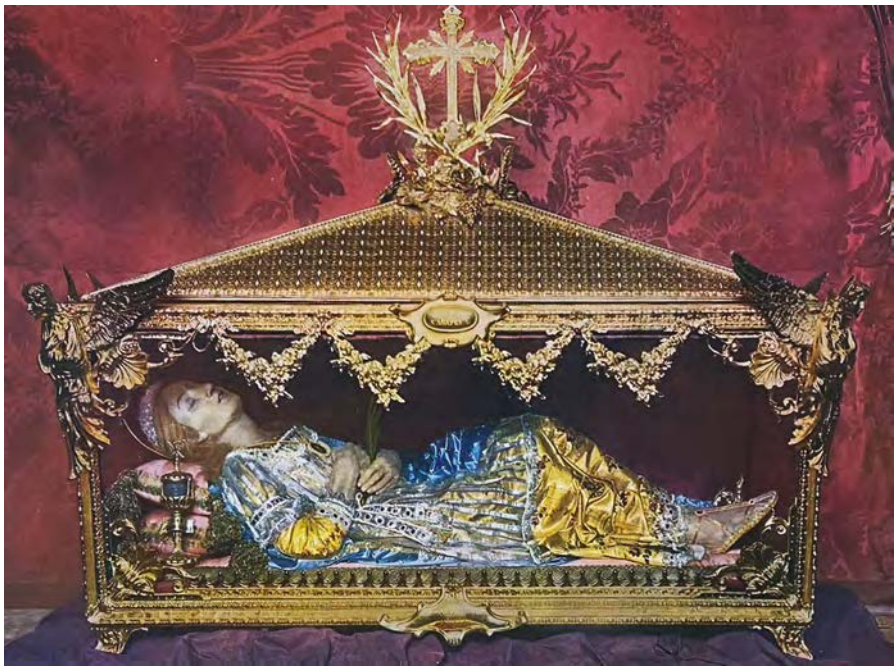

Figure 8.2. Reliquary-sculpture of St Agape preserved in the crypt of St Agape, Cathedral of Chiari (Brescia). Devotional image, Parish Archive of Chiari. Reproduced with the permission of the archive.

'industrial manufacture'.[56] If the Roman workshops had a monopoly in creating standardized models, this does not mean that the simulacra were all the same. In addition to the craft shops, in cloistered monasteries and convents there were female workshops highly specialized in creating furniture, clothes, and lace to personalize the relics. Furthermore, they could be further customized once they left Rome for their new destination.[57]

In addition to the *ad hoc* personalization of the simulacrum, the body 'adoption' ceremonies were essential. The description of a case study can help clarify. After more than a month's journey, St Agape arrived in Chiari on 18 January 1796 (Fig. 8.2). The whole population was waiting for her: the bishop and the diocesan curia, the highest religious figures of the region, civil authorities, local brotherhoods, and the faithful.[58] The martyr was carried in procession through the town streets for three days and exposed to popular devotion. Continuous were the masses, chants, and even the firing of blank cannon shots. The bishop 'baptized' the saint, a ceremony that elected her

56 Ghilardi, 'Il custode', 202.
57 Budzyński and others, "Baltic Catacombs", p. 29.
58 Moletta, *S. Agape*, pp. 7–8.

as co-patron of Chiari and local saint. The chronicles of those days tell of numerous miracles: a child immediately recovered from a persistent fever, and non-believers found 'the right faith'. Four months later, the clergy carried Agape in procession to protect the village from the invasion of Napoleonic troops.[59] Chiari was spared, and for the faithful, this was due to the protection of the new patroness. Even if her story was unknown, Agape had become a local saint to whom the parish community turned.

Bodies on Display and on Tour: Practices and Interactions

With the transport of Paola Frassinetti to the convent and the arrival of St Agape in the local cathedral, a delicate phase of (re)semanticization began, wherein their human remains were charged with several meanings. The faithful saw in them not simple bones but precious and powerful relics, capable of working miracles and symbolizing the community's identity. As stated by Gillingham, 'relichood lies in the eyes of the beholder'.[60] This change of perception is a fundamental step for a body to acquire religious meanings; however, it cannot be considered a final and definitive stage. In this regard, it may be helpful to take a cue from the Weberian dynamics attributed to charismatic leaders. The latter must prove again and again their charisma to the community of reference if they want to uphold their authority.[61] A similar process also exists for relics. To continue to be venerated and invoked, it is not enough for them to be taken to churches or convents and placed in expensive reliquaries. They must demonstrate their power, interact with the faithful, and be at the centre of community life. As inanimate objects, we do not have to look at their actions but at how the public perceived them and their role. As we have seen, before she was buried in the new crystal case, the nuns carried Frassinetti in procession to the motherhouse and requested papal permission for it to be kept above ground in a visible case, demonstrating the importance of the sight of the body-relic. Agape immediately worked miracles upon entering the city and continued to do so in the following months and years, establishing a relationship of mutual aid with the citizens. In essence, saints must do something for their worshippers, and believers must demonstrate their gratitude through devout rituals and practices.

Walsham insists on a fundamental point: bodies, objects, or relics have no intrinsic religious value. They acquire it through shared beliefs and repeated practices which, over time, become traditions.[62] In the case studies considered, the faithful believed that the body of the foundress Frassinetti was incorrupt

59 Moletta, *S. Agape*, p. 9.
60 See footnote 26.
61 Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 243–46.
62 Walsham, 'Introduction', pp. 14–15.

and encapsulated her charisma while the simulacrum of Agape contained the heroic nature of her martyrdom and her thaumaturgical powers. The practices that the communities put in place were above all the display of their human remains, the interventions aimed at safeguarding the state of conservation and the organization of celebrations and public processions. Let us see in more detail these rituals and the deep interweaving between bodies with religious meanings and local communities.

The post-mortem story of Paola Frassinetti's body develops with the nuns' request to possess her remains. Once obtained, the sisters were not satisfied with burying them in the convent graveyard but wanted to put them on display. The goal was to integrate the material and symbolic body-heritage of the foundress into community life. The second exhumation of the body (1906) allowed the performance of operations with conserving liquids, the reshaping of the body, and changing the clothes. Dr Tito Gualdi supervised the restoration and decided to make up her face with paints to hide the blackening of her remains.[63] His act triggered the sisters' reaction: Paola's face had to remain 'natural'. She was already 'intact, beautiful, and fresh'.[64] The incorruption of her flesh was a divine gift that needed no further additions (however, they agreed to bathe her in the antiseptic liquid). For this reason, before the authorities sealed the urn, they cleaned her body of the paint to give it the most authentic appearance possible.[65] Once the works were finished, the nuns called the most important religious figures of the city to admire the result and allow the public exhibition. From 26 August to 2 October 1906, cardinals, members of the Vatican curia, aristocrats, the faithful, mothers with their children, and entire school groups visited the convent to admire the 'prodigy'.[66]

The religious authorities consented to using a crystal case, commissioned by the nuns so that 'the body was perfectly visible from all sides', but with the sole purpose of checking the conservation of the corpse.[67] At that period, the beatification process was underway, and the Holy See had not officially recognized the foundress. For this reason, the faithful could not venerate her publicly, and her remains could not be exhibited like those of a saint. To respect the ecclesiastical norms of *non cultu*, they agreed to cover the coffin and hide it behind a wall. While Paola was formally to remain concealed from the view of the faithful, the nuns found original solutions for viewing her body. A month after the urn was closed, they rechecked her state of conservation. From 22 to 24 November, it was again exposed to the religious community.[68] Over the years, there were numerous canonical exhumations and conservation interventions (1907, 1910, 1918, 1920, 1930), all of which were opportunities to

63 Rome, ACSSDF, *Seconda ricognizione*, fol. 14^{v}.
64 Rome, ACSSDF, *Notizie sulla Salma*, p. 3.
65 Rome, ACSSDF, *Seconda ricognizione*, fol. 15^{r}.
66 Rome, ACSSDF, *Notizie sulla Salma*, pp. 6–7.
67 Rome, ACSSDF, *Notizie sulla Salma*, pp. 4–5.
68 Rome, ACSSDF, *Seconda ricognizione*, fol. 18^{v}.

have a direct and more intimate 'encounter' with the foundress. Finally, on 8 June 1930, Pope Pius XI beatified her, and the nuns could show her incorrupt body to her faithful.[69] The reconnaissance continued even later (1971, 1984, 1990, 2005), and each intervention was exploited to take her remains in procession or on tours, such as the one to Nepi (1971) or the exhibition of the body for the first international congress of the former students of St Dorothea (1972). Even today, it is a custom that every visitor to the convent 'greet' the foundress. Fresh flowers, *ex votos*, and letters adorn the altar where the saint rests. Paola and her body are the central pivots of the religious community.

Similar practices were also addressed to the numerous martyrs in ceroplastic spread throughout Christendom. About St Agape, we have already mentioned how the local population reacted to her entry into the city. Even in her case, the veneration was not limited only to that single event but continued to be cultivated over time. The altar where the simulacrum was placed was restored and frescoed. The glass case was embellished, and a local manufacturer created a precious *pallium* (cloak).[70] However, the practice that characterized the cult of St Agape the most was the town procession and the celebrations of her liturgical feast. Every year, the local community celebrated the transport of the martyr and during anniversaries the community organized solemn celebrations.[71] For example, for the 150th anniversary, three bishops were present, and dozens of masses were celebrated. Processions were also organized to request her intercession and to collectively thank the saint. In 1836, cholera broke out in Chiari and the citizens prayed to their co-patron to limit the damage. Ten years later, when the outbreak was completely eradicated and the secular authorities granted authorization to organize such a crowded collective event, the faithful paid homage to their holy martyr with solemn rituals and processions.[72]

Paola Frassinetti and St Agape, as well as hundreds of other prodigious bodies, were at the centre of devotional practices in their communities. Deep interactions, personal ties, and strong traditions developed between the latter and the corpse. The body-relics were no longer only human remains and not even exclusively relics. As argued by Tarlow and Battel Lowman, they were 'hypersignified', loaded with multiple messages which, from time to time, were reassigned and negotiated.[73] The bodies represented a reminder of the previous life of the saint, such as the charisma or the martyrdom but they also took on new meanings, such as the foundations of the congregation or the soul of her mission. Precisely because of their importance in the local communities, these types of bodies had an extraordinary impact in Italy in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

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69 'La ricognizione del corpo della Ven. Frassinetti', *Il Messaggero*, 6 June 1930, p. 5.
70 Moletta, *S. Agape*, p. 9.
71 Moletta, *S. Agape*, pp. 10–12.
72 Moletta, *S. Agape*, p. 10.
73 See footnote 46.

Recognizable and Replicable Models

'Une piété venue d'Italie' (A piety that comes from Italy).[74] With these words, Philippe Boutry summarized the phenomenon of the dispersion of the remains of martyrs from the Roman catacombs throughout Christendom in the late modern era. From the end of the eighteenth century and especially during the following one, an Italian model of exposed bodies spread throughout the Catholic nations.[75] Pilgrims who came from abroad to visit sites of worship found bodies of saints and martyrs lying in crystal cases, with serene and incorrupt appearances, dead but without signs of corruption. These corpses did not inspire terror like *memento mori* or medieval *danses macabres*, but represented the triumph of the Christian faith over death and sin, transmitting encouraging messages of hope.

Corpisanti and incorrupt bodies were not 'invented' in this period. As we have seen, both the mystical phenomenon of incorruption and the transfer of bones from the catacombs have distant roots. Still, in these centuries, they took on innovative characteristics, such as the standardization of the method of exhibition and the very high number of corpses disseminated far and wide. Wax and ceroplastic represent significant innovations.[76] Compared to the techniques and materials previously used (such as precious fabrics, diamonds, and jewels), the new models — while not having negligible costs — were cheaper and easily replicable, almost serially.[77] While, as we have seen in this article, the body of a saint assumed religious meanings only through the social interactions carried out between a specific community and the object perceived as sacred (therefore, outside the environment, the same body could potentially lose its religious aspect and not function as a relic), the technology with which it was made could instead be copied and replicated. Maria Teresa Milicia argued how techniques and materials used to conserve and exhibit bodies evolved, passing from natural waxes to sophisticated silicone polymers like those used in making the models in Madame Tussaud's museums (such as the mask that today covers the face of the renowned St Pio of Pietrelcina).[78] There are still no studies on the workshops specialized in creating these reliquary-bodies, but it seems pretty certain that there has been an exchange of knowledge. For example, when the Handmaids of Charity of Brescia decided to have the simulacrum of Maria Crocifissa di Rosa made, the bodies of two other foundress saints present in the area, Bartolomea Capitanio (1807–1833) and Vincenza Gerosa (1784–1847), were already famous and used as models (Fig. 8.3).

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74 Boutry, *Les Saints des Catacombes*, p. 888.
75 Ghilardi, 'Antonio Magnani', p. 65.
76 Ghilardi, 'La fabbrica dei martiri', p. 332.
77 Ghilardi, 'Antonio Magnani', p. 62.
78 Milicia, 'Simulacra of Eternal Life', pp. 252–53.

Figure 8.3. Reliquary-bodies of the saints Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa, today on display in their sanctuary in Lovere (Bergamo). Archivio storico diocesano di Brescia, Ricognizione della tomba S. Vincenza Gerosa, 1934, c. 220. Reproduced with the permission of the ASDBs.

Instead, we have more information on the martyrs of ceroplastic. Ghilardi demonstrated the crucial role of the custodian in taking bones from the catacombs and executing reliquary-sculptures.[79] In late modernity, Rome became a laboratory for the production of 'material holiness'. From there, thousands of early Christian martyrs' bodies left for all of Christendom. The Italian regions were the main destinations, starting with the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. However, they also spread abundantly in European and Mediterranean countries (such as present-day France, Spain, Portugal, Malta, Algeria, and the Levant), and reached even more distant lands, such as in East Asia and Latin America.[80]

Following the masterful work done by Boutry on France, in recent decades historians have begun to reconstruct the networks of holiness, such as those between Rome and Mexico, Canada and the Baltic countries.[81] Our knowledge of the Levantine context regarding the exchange of this type of relics is inconsistent, but it was undoubtedly dynamic. Precisely because of the historiographical gap concerning the exchange of this type of bodies and religious relics between Rome and the Levant, and the potential contribution to knowledge that could derive from their in-depth study, it is worth considering some examples. We know by the custodians' registers (1737–1850) that at least twenty-eight requests for martyrs came from the Levant.[82] The applicants were often influential prelates or missionary fathers, in close contact with the Roman curia and well-informed on 'fashionable' devotional objects. Among these, the ceroplastic simulacra were the 'must-haves' of the period. The sources conserved in the Vicariate archives mainly indicate only who made the request and there is little other information. For example, Giovanni Petrucci, a priest of the Congregation of the Mission, requested for the diocese of Santorini (under the supervision of the Greek archbishop of Naxos) the body of a martyr in 1806[83] and the Syrian archbishop of Jerusalem did the same in 1818.[84] In both instances, the response of the cardinal vicar has not come down to us.

Fortunately, we have more information about other cases. As we saw at the beginning, the Discalced Carmelites were present as missionaries in the Levant at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Father Antonino of the Assumption wrote to the custodian of the relics about his activity in Lebanon. In Tripoli, he encountered the local Christian community, to which he donated devotional images. The public display of these attracted the attention of the population, who asked for more relics and sacred images. 'For the consolation

79 Ghilardi, 'Il custode', pp. 186–90.
80 Boutry, *Les Saints des Catacombes*, pp. 888–90.
81 Sánchez Reyes and others, 'Sanctity Via the Light of Science'; Budzyński and others, ''Baltic Catacombs''; Dahan, 'From Rome to Montreal'.
82 Boutry, *Les Saints des Catacombes*, p. 887.
83 Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, IV, vol. 80, fols 151^{r}–53^{r}.
84 Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, IV, vol. 80, 402^{r}.

of the good faithful surrounded by infidels', Father Antonino requested that the vicar give them two bodies of martyrs to feed the devotion of the Lebanese believers.[85] As with other European nations and mission lands in Asia and America, the simulacra of the martyrs were also used as precious relics in the Levant to spread the Christian faith. Not only were the Carmelites present in the Near East, but the Franciscans also claimed a centuries-old evangelical activity in the area. The General Commissioner Father of the Holy Land, in close relation with the head of the Sacred Congregation *de propaganda fide*, demanded a simulacrum for the Minor Observants of Aleppo.[86] Cardinal Ignazio Giovanni Cadolini, leader of the above congregation and archbishop of Edessa, made direct contact with the vicar to ensure the concession of the relic. The response was in fact positive, and the effigy of St Prospero — extracted on 8 February 1837 from the catacomb of St Ciriaca in Verano — was granted.[87]

From Rome to the whole Christian world, passing through the Mediterranean and the Levant, bodies of saints, founders, and martyrs circulated widely in late modernity. Among the reasons for this success, the recognition and replicability of these models should be noted. Seeing a body, placed in a glass case, and displayed in a place of worship indicated — even to non-members of a community — that it belonged to the category of bodies with religious significance. Even without knowing the story of those remains, a faithful Catholic was generally able to recognize that subject as a relic. Recognition often also generated emulation and the desire among the faithful to have the body of a saint or martyr for their communities.

No Conclusion for a Story Yet to Be Written

From human bones to venerated relics. In these pages, we have seen how an object — a body in particular — does not intrinsically embody any spiritual or religious meaning. However, it can assume new values through a series of social dynamics. Shared beliefs and community practices provide a new life to bodies and objects, transforming them into 'cultural capital'.[88] Over the centuries, the Roman Church has defined precise actions for producing and recognizing relics, closely connected with sanctity. The Catholic faithful do not deny ecclesiastical norms a priori, but they might develop spontaneous interests and devotions, not mediated, or not yet recognized by the clergy. For instance, this is the case for people who died with *fama sanctitatis*. Even before the Roman curia intervened, the religious or local community could

85 Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, v, vol. 81, 5[r].

86 Request of the General Commissioner Father of the Holy Land and the head of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, 31 January 1839 to the Cardinal Vicar Giuseppe della Porta Rodiani. Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, V, vol. 81, 83[r].

87 Rome, AV, *Corpi e Reliquie*, v, vol. 81, 84[v].

88 Nafte, 'Institutional Bodies', p. 206.

request custody of the corpse, thus starting the process of redefining it. Once the human remains of a founder, saint-to-be, or martyr pass into the possession of the community, the phase of the 'adoption' of it begins, developing beliefs and devotional practices (such as the baptism of the body, its exhibition, and public processions). Neither religious nor civil authorities are excluded from these processes but they assume a crucial role in the approval of these practices.

In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the public display and circulation of saints' bodies and the martyrs' reliquary-sculptures were extremely common in Christianity. These 'Italian models', easily recognizable and with a considerable emotional and devotional impact, conquered the Catholic world, meeting the favour of the clergy and the wishes of the faithful. Different religious communities replicated and emulated these models, requesting the possession the human remains of their heroes and placing them on display. Even if these practices were widespread in the period studied, they have not entirely disappeared today. From the second half of the nineteenth century, — with the creation of the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology and the consequent decline of the role of custodian of relics and developments in the archaeological field — the bones of presumed martyrs stopped being removed from the catacombs, thus interrupting the production of effigies in ceroplastic.[89] Despite this and the deep theological debate on the legitimacy of cults towards uncertain relics, there are still active devotions relating to these simulacra in different areas of present-day Italy (and beyond). The bodies of saints deserve a separate discussion. Discoveries in the medical and scientific fields warn against speaking lightly of incorruption and post-mortem corporeal phenomena. However, still today, the faithful consider it significant to see the corpses of the saints after their death (like the case of Thérèse of Lisieux that we mentioned at the beginning). There are famous recent examples of the reconstruction of the face of Carlo Acutis on the occasion of his beatification and the silicone mask of Padre Pio, perpetually displayed in the sanctuary of San Giovanni Rotondo. While changing and evolving over time, certain beliefs and dynamics still seem to survive.

Scholars have only recently and to a limited extent explored the complex world of bodies with religious significance. Further studies will allow us to broaden our knowledge of the material dimension of holiness, cults, and popular beliefs but will also help improve our understanding of the relationship between Rome and the Mediterranean, Europe, the Levant, and distant mission lands. The story of bodies is in its early days but it promises fruitful results and discoveries.

89 Ghilardi, 'Il custode', p. 203.

ABSTRACT The chapter explores the transformation of mortal remains into devotional objects, focusing on entire bodies displayed as relics in churches and religious places in Italy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It examines the dynamics behind the selection of these bodies and the religious significance assigned to them. The study considers two categories: corpses of heroes of faith believed to be incorruptible and human-shaped simulacra of early Christian martyrs. The author aims to understand the role of believers in developing practices and rituals around these bodies, as well as the involvement of religious and secular authorities.

KEYWORDS Dead bodies, martyrs, relics, incorruptibles, *corpisanti*, material religion, popular practices

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The Journey of Prehistoric Remains

Rereading the Case of Scoglio del Tonno, Taranto (1899–1950s)

Introduction: Data Journeys and Scientific Paradigms

The theme of object mobility has received increasing attention from historians in recent years. In particular, the history of science deserves credit for highlighting how the concept of mobility has to be approached and understood from two complementary perspectives.[1] On the one hand, it can be approached from the point of view of the 'transfer, circulation, travel, or exchange of information, knowledge, objects, and people'.[2] On the other, it can be understood as an 'operative process' within an epistemological perspective that includes the impact of the mobility of objects, people, themes, knowledge, etc. on scientific practices and theories.[3] From this debate, it follows that mobility is not only a spatial-temporal phenomenon but also a social phenomenon, and therefore it is linked to the power dynamics that operate in a given historical context.[4]

In archaeology, the topic of object mobility is particularly relevant for at least two reasons. On the one hand, every archaeological theory is based on the materiality of scientific data. Since objects (sites, remains, or scientific specimens) embody the data, this data remains intrinsically linked to material culture. On the other hand, archaeological knowledge is rooted in the context of discovery.[5] From this perspective, mobility involves at least three aspects of the construction of archaeological knowledge. The first one concerns the

1 For an updated discussion of the contribution of the history of science to mobility studies, see Canadelli, 'Mobilizing Pictures', pp. 38–45.
2 Schäfer, 'Editorial: Mobility Studies, a Transdisciplinary Field', p. viii.
3 Schäfer, 'Editorial: Mobility Studies, a Transdisciplinary Field', pp. viii–ix.
4 Sheller, 'Response: The Mobile Itineraries of Knowledge-scapes', p. 88.
5 See, e.g., Jürcke and others, 'Knowledge-scapes', pp. 1–24; Edgeworth, *Acts of Discovery*, pp. 53–70.

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Travelling Matters across the Mediterranean, ed. by Beatrice Falcucci, Emanuele Giusti, and Davide Trentacoste, HIMO 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2024), pp. 255–280
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mobility of the scientific object, which can be removed from the discovery context and passed on to new contexts, such as public and private collections. The second aspect relates to the mobility of excavation practices and the possibility of collecting data from the context and using it to attribute new meanings to the individual find. The third one, finally, regards the mobility of ideas and theories, thus the epistemological, political, and social framework within which the object is interpreted.

Archaeological findings, therefore, do not travel only for protection reasons. Much more often, they move because they constitute scientific data, cultural symbols, or tools of political propaganda. To summarize these dynamics, for the purpose of this article, it is useful to adopt the concept of the 'data journey'. With this definition, we mean the material, social, and institutional circumstances under which data are packed and transported across research situations so as to function as evidence for a variety of knowledge claims.[6] The relevance of the 'data' (therefore of the finds) within a scientific, social, and political context determines not only the circulation but also the destination of conservation and exhibition of the objects in collections. It follows that different scientific communities may tend to value, move, and circulate different data on the basis, more or less consciously, of research interests, training received, scientific community or group of reference, networks in which they are inserted, self-promotion strategies, requests from communities or social groups, nationalist instances, etc.

What was summarized above is also true when different paradigms compete for public space.[7] Italian prehistoric archaeology at the end of the nineteenth century offers an interesting example of these dynamics. Two scientific paradigms clashed in the search for the origins of the Italian nation, the Mediterranean and the Aryan ones. Both paradigms grappled with the myriad historical invasions that had impacted the Italian peninsula from antiquity through to the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the focal point of national origin and its bio-cultural-racial identity was ultimately situated in prehistory and the proto-historical phases from which the Roman civilization had its genesis. According to the Aryan paradigm, it posited that the ancient Romans were descendants of populations who had emigrated from the Alps and central-eastern Europe, belonging to the Aryan lineage. Conversely, proponents of the Mediterranean paradigm located the origins of ancient Romans within the territories of the Eastern Mediterranean or even North Africa, designating them as populations that had arrived via sea migration and were characterized as 'Mediterranean' in racial terms.

The two scholars who best embodied the two hypotheses on the origin of the nation were Giuseppe Sergi, who coined the term 'Mediterranean race',

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6 Leonelli, 'Performing Abstraction'.

7 Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*. See also Kuhn, *The Last Writings of Thomas S. Kuhn*.

which he first described in terms that can be traced back to Darwin's theory, and Luigi Pigorini.[8] The latter undoubtedly exerted enormous influence on the young generations of Italian archaeologists between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He was the director of the archaeological school of Rome, director of the national museum of archaeology and ethnography of Rome, and the only Italian University professor of prehistoric archaeology for more than twenty years. Entire generations of archaeologists were trained at his school. In addition to exerting a substantial cultural influence, Pigorini demonstrated notable political acumen. He cultivated close relations with the Italian royal family, notably serving as the instructor in archaeology to Queen Elena (1900–1946). As he advanced in his accomplished administrative career, Pigorini progressively undertook political responsibilities within parliamentary commissions, culminating in his appointment as a senator in the Italian Kingdom. It was only in the second decade of the twentieth century that the influence of the Pigorinian paradigm began to wane: new political and social needs accompanied the first revival of the Mediterraneanist paradigm, which the Italian anthropological school supported, starting in 1918 and continuing with the rise of fascism.[9] This change in interpretative framework was also reflected in the studies of pre-Roman archaeology led by Ugo Rellini.[10]

Returning to our present concerns, as stated, the purpose of this article is to deconstruct the dynamics that led to the dissemination and valorisation of prehistoric artefacts and archaeological sites between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Italy. The case study examined is that of the prehistoric site of Scoglio del Tonno (Taranto)[11] and the artefacts that emerged from the excavation of 1899–1900. This is a partially known case in literature.[12] However, due to its importance in the history of prehistoric research in Italy, it deserves further investigation. International studies of the site today focus on the theme of the Mycenaean period and contacts between southern Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean. In the context of Mediterranean exchanges, the site of Scoglio del Tonno has been considered since the first decade of the 1900s as a source of primary importance. However, until now, the story of the discovery and the completely different interpretation given at the time

8 Pizzato, 'Fossili della Nazione'; Tarantini, 'Tra teoria pigoriniana e mediterraneismo'.

9 Piasere, 'Il nuovo manifesto della razza (1942)', pp. 464–67.

10 Cultraro, 'Ugo Rellini'; Tarantini, 'Appunti su archeologia preistorica e fascismo'.

11 The archaeological site of Scoglio del Tonno, dating from the sixteenth/fourteenth century BCE to the end of the first millennium BC, was excavated in the late nineteenth century during the levelling of the promontory for the construction of the railway near present-day Porta Napoli. Conducted at various intervals, the research revealed a complex stratigraphy, featuring an older Neolithic village. Positioned strategically at the natural passage between Mar Grande and Mar Piccolo, the settlement, fortified with defensive walls, contained diverse spaces, including a prominent area divided into two rooms with an apsidal end wall. Among the artefacts discovered were bronzes, a mould, and a crucible, providing evidence of local manufacturing, a phenomenon also observed in the case of ceramics.

12 Peroni, 'Preistoria e protostoria', pp. 13–20.

by Pigorini, who saw its importance in the context of relations with central Europe, have been hastily dismissed and attributed to the incompetence (or even malice) of Pigorini's disciples.[13]

It is precisely on that first interpretation that this essay will focus. The first part will reconstruct the history of the discovery of the archaeological site. The second will be devoted to contextualizing the discovery in the national scientific (and political) landscape. The third section aims to deconstruct the dynamics of the circulation of the discovery in the national context and discuss the influence of scientific communities and Pigorinian hegemony on the interpretation of the archaeological site. Then, the international circulation of data on Scoglio del Tonno in the first decade of the twentieth century will be discussed. Following this, the reinterpretation of the site during the fascist era and in the early decades of the Italian Republic will be examined. Finally, the effect of material, social, and institutional circumstances that shaped the interpretation and transportation of the archaeological findings across the Italian Peninsula will be discussed.

The Discovery of Scoglio del Tonno (Taranto)

In February 1899, during the construction of a new commercial port on the cliff located northwest of the city of Taranto, in a place called 'Punta Tonno' or 'Scoglio del Tonno', an archaeological site was discovered. On the evening of 16 February, the archaeologist Quintino Quagliati (1869–1932), accompanied by the excavation superintendent Edoardo Caruso, conducted an initial stratigraphic reconstruction of the site.[14] Quagliati had graduated in literature in Bologna, where he had been a student of Giosuè Carducci, the poet who was a symbol of Italian unity. He then specialized in palaeontology in Rome and was a student of Luigi Pigorini, with whom he maintained a long correspondence that began when he was his student. This relationship helped Quagliati in his career: in 1898, he became deputy inspector of excavations and, in the same year, was appointed acting director of the Museum of Taranto. In 1909, he also became Superintendent of Antiquities and Monuments in Puglia. To these positions, in 1916, Quagliati added that of Superintendent of Antiquities in Basilicata. He directed the excavations and published the site of Scoglio del Tonno.

During the initial assessment of the site, Quagliati established the existence of three main layers. He attributed the upper one to the Mycenaean age based on the discovery of Aegean ceramic material. Thanks to this attribution, he was able to attest to 'the most remote antiquity of the archaeological layer

13 Peroni, 'Preistoria e protostoria', p. 46.

14 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', pp. 411–12; the news was announced in the newspaper *La Tribuna*, 18 July 1899. Pigorini himself reported on the discovery 'Notizie', pp. 6–7.

below it'.[15] During subsequent inspections in the following months, Quagliati identified a Neolithic settlement that was associated with 'hut foundations'[16] (corresponding to the oldest archaeological layer). However, what caught the attention of the Romagna archaeologist was the middle archaeological layer, where he found numerous holes. These holes were interpreted as originating from the decomposition of poles that had formed the bases of a pile dwelling. In addition, Quagliati noticed a layer of silt, which he interpreted as a drainage basin underlying a prehistoric station built on poles.[17]

Despite the discoveries, the archaeological work at Scoglio del Tonno suffered repeated interruptions. The site had been discovered during work to modernize the port infrastructure. In the early days of June, the Cavalier Francesco Martorano-owned company, which was working on the port expansion, prevented the continuation of archaeological surveys. Unfortunately, in the following months, demolition work led to the considerable destruction of some of the archaeological material. In these weeks, national institutions and local archaeological officials did not do much to protect the site. During the summer months, only the excavation custodian, Emilio Bavila, was left to watch over the site. Bavila was then appointed by the local authorities to 'observe' and record in an excavation journal the findings that were brought to light and destroyed by the Martorano company workers, but no one intervened to protect the ancient remains. Later, Quagliati used Bavila's excavation journal to make up for the loss of some of the archaeological material in his report on the excavations. For example, Quagliati reported the news of the destruction of an 'intact […] hut rich in furnishings' that 'would undoubtedly have offered valuable results to our observation if the implacable demolition pickaxe of the Martorano company had not quickly destroyed it'.[18] Similarly, the observations of the custodian were used to reinforce the notion about the presence of the pile dwelling that had already caught Quagliati's attention, as mentioned above.

> During the excavation of the earth, carried out by the construction company, the pile dwelling wonderfully showed its traces […] which were so evident that even the most unskilled workers, now accustomed to the nature of my research, recognised the imprints of the poles and with their bare hands cleared the cavity of the disturbed soil, admiring with curiosity the remains of the wood they extracted. And I saw several of these holes still retaining, torn like rags, the woody fibres in the direction of the pole's length. This fact was observed and unquestionably affirmed by the many people who visited the site of the discoveries and excavations, so much

15 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 420.
16 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 432.
17 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 432.
18 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 445.

> so that we no longer paid special attention to it, as their indication on the plan was also impossible.[19]

This note by Quagliati lends itself to various considerations. First of all, it emphasizes the somewhat approximate nature of the work carried out by the archaeologist at the Scoglio del Tonno site, particularly during the months when work resumed. Certainly, this approximation could have been a result of the circumstances imposed by the Martorano construction company. Despite this, Quagliati considered the observations made by the workers as reliable elements for the reconstruction of the site and used them as significant evidence.

Archaeological excavations resumed in September 1899 thanks to the support of the Ministry of Public Instruction. However, in mid-month, the Martorano company reopened the construction site with the support of the Ministry of Public Works.[20] Only after the mission of archaeologist Paolo Orsi, sent by the Ministry of Public Instruction to Taranto to evaluate the importance of the discovery, could the work of the archaeologists continue undisturbed. This happened at the end of October 1899. Therefore, for four months, the Martorano company excavated the archaeological area, turning it into a construction site. However, when the industrial expansion was halted, there were insufficient funds for excavation. It was Paolo Orsi, acting as an intermediary with the ministry, who provided Quagliati with 500 lire,[21] a significant amount of money for the time, to continue the surveys and scientific activity.

The Ministry only provided protection for sites deemed of great national interest. Crucial for the protection of the Scoglio del Tonno site was the identification by Quagliati of some '*terramare*'. The term 'terramare' (also called Terremarne, Terremare, or Marniere) defines an ancient culture mainly of the Po Valley (Emilia-Romagna, Italy) dating to the Middle and Late Bronze Age (1700–1150 BCE). Between the 1860s and 1910, Luigi Pigorini and many other academics thoroughly excavated the sites. According to Luigi Pigorini's theory, the terramare were the distinguishing feature of the earliest and purest Italic civilization. According to Pigorini, modern Italian civilization would have originated from the inhabitants of the terramare. Ancient Rome was a city founded on a *cardo* and a *decumanus*,[22] with a spatial orientation (N–S; E–W) that Pigorini believed he had already found in prehistoric terramare. Thus, the genealogy of the nation unfolded over three successive steps: the Terramare,

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19 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 445 n. 1.

20 See Quagliati's letter to Pigorini, 20 August 1899, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 20, Fascicolo 5, Autore 1, Lettera 29.

21 See the letter on 8 August 1899, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 18, Fascicolo 4, Autore 1, Lettera 31.

22 The cardo and the decumanus maximus are the principal axes of centuriation and urban planning in ancient Rome.

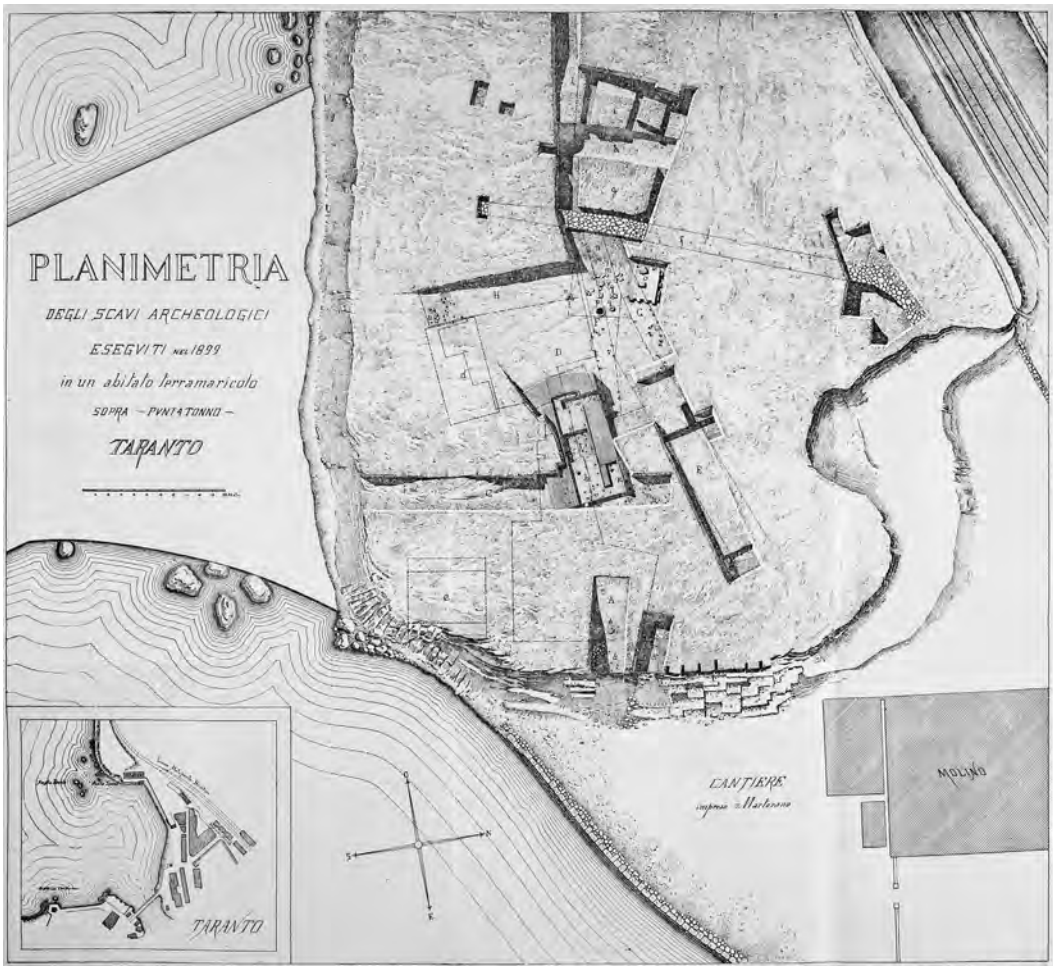

Figure 9.1. Plan of the excavation of Scoglio del Tonno. Appendix of Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* 1900. Available in the public domain.

Rome, and the Kingdom proclaimed in 1861. It is therefore understood how the identification of the Scoglio del Tonno site with a terramara caught the government's interest.

In Taranto, Quagliati described an older terramara on which a second terramara had been built 'according to the custom of the Italics of the lower Po Valley, who rebuilt their villages in the same place after burning the previous one to purify the site […]'.[23] On 5 October, he noted that the western side of the settlement showed 'the defensive features of the embankment and ditch,

23 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 449.

as in the Italic terramare of the lower Po Valley'.[24] Subsequently, a '*public road* was also uncovered, identified by an "oriented decumanus"'.[25] According to Quagliati, even the pottery showed a characteristic homogeneity and revealed 'similarities and identities compared to the terracotta of the terramare in the Po Valley'.[26] Therefore, he confidently concluded his report to the Ministry (later published in the *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*) by stating that: 'the Taranto station, wrapped in the middle archaeological layer of Punta del Tonno, belongs, in short, to an advanced period of the pure Bronze Age and refers, in form and industries, to the well-known civilisation of the Terramare.'[27]

Scoglio del Tonno between Personal Strategies and the Public Use of Archaeology[28]

The interpretation of the site and the findings of Scoglio del Tonno was conditioned by power dynamics and interpretative paradigms similar to those characterizing the history of other scientific disciplines.[29] It is known that theories can be influenced by hegemonic paradigms,[30] scientific communities,[31] or dominant styles of thought within a certain scientific context.[32] Therefore, the study of discoveries and interpretations cannot be separated from a broader understanding of: 1) the socio-political and cultural context in which scientists are immersed;[33] 2) the social and political role of the scientists themselves in the context in which they operate, i.e. the possibility of scientists to exert a certain power within a society or social group;[34] 3) the analysis of the networks into which scientists are integrated.[35] Let us take a look at the context of and reactions to the discovery of the site in Taranto.

In 1903, the newspaper *Il Pungolo*, founded in Naples in 1860 and characterized by a strong polemical vein, hosted a heated debate on the

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24 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 451.
25 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 461.
26 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 464.
27 Quagliati, 'Relazione degli scavi archeologici', p. 464.
28 I am indebted to Michele Cupitò and the staff of the Fondo Pigorini at the University of Padua for supporting my archival research.
29 Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*.
30 Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; Kuhn, *The Last Writings of Thomas S. Kuhn*; Gramsci, *Quaderni dal Carcere*; see also Badino and Omodeo, 'For Gramsci: Hegemony in the History and Philosophy of Science', pp. 1–18.
31 Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, p. 127; Bourdieu, *La distinction: Critique sociale du Jugement*.
32 Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*; Ruphy, 'From Hacking's Plurality of Styles of Scientific Reasoning to 'Foliated' Pluralism.
33 See e.g. Kuhn, *The Last Writings of Thomas S. Kuhn*; and Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*.
34 See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
35 See Latour, *Science in Action*; Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.

management of the Archaeological Museum of Naples.[36] The director of the museum, Ettore Pais (1856–1939), and Count Adolfo Cozza (1848–1910), his close collaborator and head of the Museum of Villa Giulia in Rome, also dragged Luigi Pigorini, Director of the Italian Archaeological School in Rome, into the controversy. In particular, they accused Pigorini of having directly and fraudulently influenced the excavations at Scoglio del Tonno. In addition to Pigorini, Cozza also attacked Quagliati regarding the reorganization carried out at the Museum of Taranto: the accusers claimed that, in order not to contradict Pigorini's hypothesis that the Terramaricoli had migrated from northern Italy to the Ionian Sea, Quagliati did not exhibit all the artefacts unearthed from the Punta Tonno excavations, but only those that could support Pigorini's thesis.[37] These were very serious accusations, and the editorial staff of *Il Pungolo* immediately distanced themselves from Cozza and Pais. Pigorini and Quagliati reacted to the provocation that emerged in the press by reaffirming their own interpretation of the Taranto site. Overall, the attack on Pigorini and his theory based on the excavations at Scoglio del Tonno had a boomerang effect and contributed to making the 'terramara' of the municipality of Taranto more popular. Quagliati's response letter[38] was presented in the press as a testimony to the scientificity of the excavations and the ability of palaeontology to shed new light on the antiquities of southern Italy. Therefore, Quagliati's work was celebrated for the very important discoveries it led to. On 12 October 1903, the management of *Il Pungolo* wrote:

> From the most distinguished Prof. Quagliati, we have received this important letter and we publish it in its entirety […] because it makes some remarkable discoveries (sic!) from the excavations in southern Italy popular, which until now had been almost exclusively the domain of technicians.[39]

But what were the accusations made by Cozza and Pais based on? Was there a 'scientific plan' within which their doubts could be effectively supported? The answer to this question can be found in the correspondence between Pigorini, Quagliati, and Orsi. In fact, within the Italian palaeontology community, the discovery of Scoglio del Tonno was the subject of long discussion. However, the discussion remained private, shared only by the three protagonists of the event. According to the documents preserved in the Pigorini Fund of the University of Padua, Quagliati mentioned the Taranto discoveries for the first time in a letter dated 26 July 1899. It is stated that Pigorini had already been informed of the importance of the discoveries during a previous trip

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36 *Il Pungolo*, 201–19; 278; 282 (1903) (see also *Il Pungolo*, 1904).

37 See *Il Pungolo* (1903, nos 201–19), pp. 1–2.

38 Quagliati, Quintino, 'Le importanti scoperte sullo Scoglio del Tonno a Taranto. Risposta al Conte Cozza', in *Il Pungolo* (12–13 October 1903), pp. 1–2.

39 *Il Pungolo* (12–13 October 1903), p. 1.

by Quagliati to the Ministry. The two had therefore met in Rome to discuss the site privately. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Ministry of Public Instruction had appointed the archaeologist and superintendent Paolo Orsi to attempt mediation with the construction company that was working in the port. After the site inspections, however, Orsi did not fully communicate his evaluations to either Quagliati or the Ministry.[40] These opinions are clearly expressed only in a letter dated 8–9 August to Pigorini.[41] Orsi is very clear: Quagliati is described as an inexperienced archaeologist who had made too few surveys to understand the true nature of the site. Despite this, Orsi did not make a negative report to the Ministry because he appreciated Quagliati's goodwill and excellent work at the museum in Taranto. Orsi's opinion did not change in the following years. In Quagliati's obituary (1933), Orsi referred to him as an 'archaeologist of the pickaxe', but also 'one of the most hardworking militant archaeologists of the south'.[42] The historiography of Italian archaeology in Orsi's obituary, however, only noted the denigratory image, neglecting Quagliati's excellent museological work, which is still to be rediscovered. The history of Italian archaeology also appears more interested in the contemporary outcome of the 1900 excavation[43] than in the historical, political, social, and epistemological motivations behind Quagliati's error (the identification of the site as a Terramara). Orsi's letter to Pigorini[44] is significant in terms of the scientific evaluation of the site. According to Orsi, Scoglio del Tonno could not in any way be considered a terramara station for at least three reasons. First, the holes in the poles on which the pile dwelling was supposed to rest were too few and too irregular. Secondly, Orsi had not found any basins. Finally, what for Quagliati were woody fibres interpretable as remains of the decay of the poles, for Orsi were simply a mixture of grass and algae. In the conclusion of the letter, Orsi expressed the opinion that the site was the work of a people who had emigrated from the Mediterranean and not from central European terramaras.[45]

In the autumn of 1899, despite his awareness of Orsi's opinion, Quagliati wrote to Pigorini that during a visit to the site, even the director of the Archaeological Museum of Florence, Luigi A. Milani, had confirmed the

40 See the letter written by Quagliati to Pigorini on 20 August 1899 (Letter written by Quintino Quagliati to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 20, Fascicolo 5, Autore 1, Lettera 29).

41 Letter written by Paolo Orsi to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 18, Fascicolo 4, Autore 1, Lettera 31.

42 Orsi, 'Quintino Quagliati', pp. 127–32.

43 See e.g. Peroni, 'Preistoria e protostoria'.

44 Letter written by Paolo Orsi to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 18, Fascicolo 4, Autore 1, Lettera 31.

45 Letter written by Paolo Orsi to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 18, Fascicolo 4, Autore 1, Lettera 31.

presence of a terramara (including the embankment that Orsi had denied the presence of) at Scoglio del Tonno. Milani had also sent a telegram to the Ministry in this regard, which allocated, perhaps as a result of this, another 3,000 lire for the continuation of the archaeological excavations.[46] In the following months, Quagliati did not keep Orsi informed of the results of the excavations, probably because he was totally immersed in the excavation work and also, perhaps, for 'ideological' reasons related to the different interpretation given to the Punta Tonno site.[47] The disagreements between the two positions were now fully emerging. On 12 December, Quagliati wrote a new letter to Pigorini. In it, Quagliati stated that there was 'no doubt, it is absolutely proven, not on my faith but with saved and to be published facts, that in Taranto there is a terramara identical to those of Emilia'.[48] Furthermore, Quagliati accused Orsi of wanting to find the 'Siculoids'[49] at Scoglio del Tonno only in order to support his own theories, which were different from those of Pigorini.[50] However, Orsi's objections worried Pigorini. He wanted to personally visit the site in the spring of 1901 with his son Luciano, but the trip was ultimately cancelled,[51] and in a 1903 essay, Scoglio del Tonno became the final piece of Pigoriono's theory of how the terramare were the distinguishing feature of the earliest and purest Italic civilization.[52] Pigorini's essay received praise even from Orsi, who, in a letter dated 3 August 1903, complimented the ability of the Emiliano palaeontologist to synthesize many complex problems concerning Italian prehistory and protohistory.[53] On the same occasion, however, Orsi emphasized his total dissent from the interpretation of Scoglio del Tonno. Quagliati, on the other hand, continued to affirm his idea in all the subsequent publications in which he dealt with the antiquities of Puglia.[54]

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46 Letter written by Quintino Quagliati to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 20, Fascicolo 5, Autore 1, Lettera 30.

47 Quagliati wrote to Pigorini on 12 December, probably in response to a letter from Pigorini asking for an explanation regarding the silence kept by the Romagna archaeologist towards Orsi. In his letter, Quagliati asks Pigorini not to believe that he had intentionally obstructed Orsi. See Letter written by Quintino Quagliati to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 20, Fascicolo 5, Autore 1, Lettera 31.

48 Letter written by Quintino Quagliati to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 20, Fascicolo 5, Autore 1, Lettera 31.

49 Paolo Orsi had extensively studied Sicily and identified in its earliest inhabitants (the Siculoids) a people of Mediterranean origin.

50 Letter written by Quintino Quagliati to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 20, Fascicolo 5, Autore 1, Lettera 31.

51 Letter written by Quintino Quagliati to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 20, Fascicolo 5, Autore 1, Lettera 47.

52 Pigorini, 'Le più antiche civiltà dell'Italia', pp. 218–26.

53 Letter written by Paolo Orsi to Luigi Pigorini, Padua, University of Padua, Fondo Pigorini, Busta 18, Fascicolo 5, Autore 1, Lettera 12.

54 Quagliati, *Relazione sugli scavi e scoperte nell'Apulia*; Quagliati, *Tombe neolitiche in Taranto e nel suo territorio*; Quagliati, *Le antiche civiltà dell'Apulia*; Quagliati, *La Puglia preistorica*.

It was therefore possible to have another interpretation of the Scoglio del Tonno site, but the Pigorinian theory acted as an interpretive paradigm within which to place archaeological discoveries. This was possible on the one hand because Quagliati belonged to the Pigorini school, and, on the other, because the socio-political context of the time supported the hypothesis of a prehistoric unity of Italy.

The Pigorinian Theory and the Second Life of Archaeological Remains

On 7 June 1903, three years after the publication of the Scoglio del Tonno excavations, Luigi Pigorini gave a report to the Royal Academy of the Lincei, one of the most important cultural institutions of the Kingdom of Italy. He presented an updated reconstruction of the prehistoric and pre-Roman settlements of Italy, which was later published in the prestigious magazine *Nuova Antologia*.[55] The report provided a more detailed version of the papers previously presented and published in 1885 and 1891. Furthermore, it had stronger nationalist tones than those earlier reports.

It began by emphasizing that some areas of the peninsula were among the first to be populated in Europe, along with France, Belgium, the British Isles, and the Iberian Peninsula. He admitted that the first people who migrated to prehistoric Italy came from Africa.[56] This population would have continued to live in some areas of Italy, especially in the Lessini Mountains (Verona), maintaining its civilization unchanged until after the fall of the Roman Republic (27 BCE). After this first phase of civilization in Italy, three new waves of migration would have followed. The first would have come from the Eastern Mediterranean. The arrival of this population would have given rise to the Neolithic era. The second turning point in the civilization of the peninsula would have arrived with the first migration from the Danubian area that would have established the civilization of lake dwellings in the northern regions, between Lombardy and Veneto. However, even this migration wave would not have been the origin of the true Italic civilization. In fact, before the lake dwellers could spread to other areas, the third wave arrived. According to Pigorini, this was the 'people destined to merge the various elements of the peninsula into one and to fulfil its mission on the banks of the Tiber',[57] i.e., destined to found Rome. They too came from the banks of the Danube, knew how to melt bronze, and imported amber from the Baltic. They belonged to the same ethnicity as the inhabitants of the lake dwellings located in the water basins of central Europe, Switzerland, and northern Italy. Therefore,

55 Pigorini, 'Le più antiche civiltà dell'Italia'.
56 Pigorini, 'Le più antiche civiltà dell'Italia', p. 219.
57 Pigorini, 'Le più antiche civiltà dell'Italia', p. 222.

this population always maintained the custom of 'religiously building the lake dwelling, which constituted the national character of its stations'.[58]

The first two migration waves were composed of savages assimilable to modern populations colonized by Europeans (see Table 9.1). The last two, who came from the Danube and were of Aryan origins, were instead the ancestors of Italians. However, only the last wave had spread Italic traditions: the Terramare were interpreted as the authentic symbol of Italic civilization.

Table 9.1. Pigorini's statements in 1903 divided the settlement of the Peninsula into four phases. The populations marked by an asterisk were said to be of Central European origin, belonging to a common ethnic group (Aryans).

Period of migration to Italy	Origin	State of advancement of civilization	Ethnic comparison
Palaeolithic	Africa	Savages	Native Australians of the forests; Indigenous people of Tasmania
Neolithic	Eastern Mediterranean	New, more advanced civilization (appearance of copper)	Polynesians
Eneolithic-Bronze Age	Danube Valley	Lake Dwellers*	—
Bronze Age	Danube Valley	Terramare*	—

In this essay, Pigorini emphasizes the role of the Italian archaeological school in serving the nation, stating that the reconstruction of the Terramara civilization was all thanks to Italian scholars. In particular, Italian research was credited with identifying the presence of Terramara on the shores of the Ionian Sea. Pigorini writes, 'Today, the most evident proof of this can be found in the terramara of Taranto' (at Scoglio del Tonno), and studying it 'seems like studying the Bronze Age of Lake Garda or the provinces of Emilia'.[59] Quagliati's work thus became a central element of Pigorini's theory, and the political implications were clear. Thanks to the discoveries in Taranto and Quagliati's interpretation, Pigorini could finally argue that the unification of the peninsula had already occurred in the Bronze Age, through the Terramara civilization. In doing so, he pursued two strategic objectives: 1. He highlighted the importance of the school he founded and directed for national construction; 2. He finally made his theory suitable for supporting the legitimacy of the young Kingdom of Italy and the policies of the government and monarchy. In doing so, Pigorini

58 Pigorini, 'Le più antiche civiltà dell'Italia', p. 223.
59 Pigorini, 'Le più antiche civiltà dell'Italia', p. 223.

explicitly stated the social and political role of archaeologists in the Italian socio-political context of the early twentieth century.

The Pigorinian interpretation of Scoglio del Tonno had important consequences for the preservation of artefacts and their distribution across Italy. The presence of the Terramara had to be demonstrated and disseminated. Pigorini then implemented the usual 'centralizing' formula, according to which the most valuable national artefacts should be kept in the National Museum of Rome, of which he was director. The scientific motivation was inherent in the epistemology of materiality typical of the period, based on the typological comparison of artefacts. Comparing similar artefacts allowed scholars to verify their provenance in human communities that belonged to a single culture or tribe. In other words, typological juxtaposition allowed for scientific narratives on the common origin of different populations to be supported. Alongside the 'scientific' motivation, there was a second motivation for bringing the artefacts to Rome: the museum had to be a true national monument. Therefore, it had to tell the story and support the legitimacy of the Italian nation. The inclusion of the Scoglio del Tonno artefacts in Roman collections allowed for the monumentalization of the Pigorinian national identity narrative using scientific evidence from 'speaking objects'.

Therefore, regarding the data journey of the Scoglio del Tonno artefacts, the 'material, social, and institutional circumstances by which data are packed and transported across'[60] the Italian peninsula were based on the need to support Pigorini's project (and the Italian government's) of constructing and musealizing the nation's history. To this end, already in July 1900, Pigorini turned to the Minister to assert the need to allow all scholars to 'compare the mentioned Tarantine dishes with identical ones from Upper Italy' so that they could be convinced 'of the diffusion that the civilization to which the dishes belong had in the Peninsula'. In order to do this, the artefacts had to be transported to Rome as soon as possible. From that moment on, the physical journey of the 'data' of Scoglio del Tonno began across the Peninsula. Two groups of objects arrived in Rome, first through the intervention of the Ministry and then as a gift from Quagliati. They are still preserved in the storerooms of the Museum of Civilisations, although the accompanying documentation seems to be lost.[61] Another group of artefacts was sent to Bologna, the capital of the region where the Terramare sites are located. Bologna already had an important collection on the Terramare, so the museum's curator, the archaeologist Edoardo Brizio, requested that some materials be sent to him from Taranto in order to document the similarities between the Terramare and prehistoric settlements in the south of the country. This was another way of asserting the centrality of a museum, that of Bologna, in the context of national studies and politics.

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60 Leonelli, 'Performing Abstraction'.

61 Belardelli, *Coppa Nevigata*; Belardelli, 'Scoglio del Tonno: collezioni'.

The interpretation of an archaeological site and its reading within a scientific paradigm and a favourable political context can promote the data journey and the dispersal of important collections throughout the national territory. The work of musealization did not depend on the lack of local museums. Even with the museum in Taranto under construction and well organized according to the same Paolo Orsi, the Scoglio del Tonno artefacts were sent elsewhere, disrupting the relationship between heritage and the context of discovery. In their new locations, the archaeological data become evidence of not only scientific but also socio-political dynamics. The exchange between these two levels is at the origin of the mobility of the objects. The scientific items acquire meaning based on the interpretations and places they pass through during the construction of their biographies.[62] They testify not only to the buried civilization to which they belonged but also to the contemporary civilization at the time of their discovery and those that followed. There are also other ways in which data travels and spreads. The circulation of knowledge then paves the way for new interpretations and meanings of the artefacts and sites themselves.

The Transnational Circulation of Knowledge

The first major showcase for the revised Pigorini theory in light of the discoveries at Scoglio del Tonno was the International Congress of Historical Sciences held in Rome in 1903. The proceedings of the conference report that:

> Southern Italy has indeed been neglected too much [by archaeological research] until now; but already the beneficial effects of new research and the establishment of new excavation and collection centres can be seen. And these results are due to two young alumni of the archaeological school. Patroni, whose singular activity in the South could not continue to be carried out, reported on the paleontological discoveries in Lucania and Campania, which are largely due to him. The existence of the Siculi in the South, demonstrated by his explorations in Matera, the Zacchito Cave in the Salerno area, and elsewhere, the Etruscan influences in Campania demonstrated by the antiquities of the Sarno Valley, and the studies on the 'Pelasgian' cities of Basilicata, are now established in science. Quagliati, the new director of the Museum of Taranto, has rendered service to archaeology in Calabria, in addition to many other useful researches and works, by exploring the 'terramara' of Scoglio del Tonno, an Italic station of the Bronze Age, and by studying the archaic tombs of Matera, similar to those of Emilia in the early Iron Age, facts which would demonstrate, according to some, how the civilisation of the Po Valley has extended as far as the heel of Italy.[63]

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62 Daston, *Biographies of Scientific Objects*.

63 *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 5.31, no. 230 (1903), p. 538.

However, the news and interpretation of the Taranto site had already been disseminated by archaeological journals from other countries, including the highly respected *American Journal of Archaeology*. In volumes from 1899 and 1900, the journal reported the following:

> At 'Scoglio del Tonno', near Taranto, three layers of archaic remains have been found. The upper one contains local pottery, earlier than the 'Proto-Corinthian', with simple geometrical ornamentation. The middle layer, belonging to the period of the Terramare, contains traces of habitations on palisades and the characteristic utensils of the inhabitants of the terramare, showing that their civilization was not confined to Northern Italy. In the lowest layer are Neolithic implements (R. LANCIANI, citing Q. QUAGLIATI, Athens, September 2, 1899).[64]

And:

> Q. Quagliati gives a detailed account of excavations near Taranto, at the Scoglio del Tonno, in 1899. Three archaeological strata were found, the highest yielding vase fragments of the Mycenaean period, the middle containing abundant remains of a settlement of the terramaricoli, the lowest offering traces of dwellings of the Neolithic period. The second stratum, which is by far the most important, gives evidence of two successive settlements, and the greater part of this article is given to a minute description of the houses, means of defence.[65]

In Italy, despite Orsi's doubts, only the archaeologist Giovanni Patroni opposed the Pigorinian reading. Patroni contested not so much the interpretation of the Scoglio del Tonno site as the inclusion of all of southern Italy in the development of the Terramara civilization. Excluding Patroni, the international archaeological community seemed to accept the idea of a unity of the Italian peninsula under the influence of the Terramara civilization that occurred in the late Bronze Age. This was considered plausible at least until 1907, when the British Egyptologist and prehistoric archaeologist Thomas Eric Peet (1882–1934) published his first contribution on the prehistory of southern Italy. In his article, Peet fully accepted the identification of the Scoglio del Tonno site with a terramara, as testimony that Quagliati's treatise was constructed convincingly and accurately. Peet indeed affirmed that there was no doubt about its possibility in the international scientific community:

> In 1899, interest in the south of the Peninsula was heightened by Quagliati's discovery of a terramara at Tarentum. To anyone who has examined the immense mass of material from this site there can be no particle of doubt that the terramara of Scoglio del Tonno at Tarentum is exactly identical to the terramare of the Po valley. Moreover, the bronzes of Scoglio Tonno

64 *American Journal of Archaeology*, 4.2 (1900), pp. 262–63.
65 *American Journal of Archaeology*, 5.3 (1901), p. 354.

> at Tarentum are especially identical in type with the terramare of the Po valley. Moreover, the bronzes of Scolio del Tonno, especially the fibulae, prove conclusively that, in date, this station is contemporaneous with the later examples of Reggio Emilia. Indeed, we cannot hesitate to adopt Prof. Pigorini's conclusion that towards the end of the Terramara period in the Po valley, a body of inhabitants detached themselves and, making their way south, settled at Tarentum. This discovery was a strong confirmation of a theory which Pigorini had already suggested, viz. a parallel development in South and North Italy in the early Iron Age. Here at Tarentum had actually been found the indubitable remains of the very people who were responsible for the civilisations of the Bronze Age in the Po valley and of the early Iron Age in North Italy and the west coast, i.e., Etruria and Latium.[66]

However, in his article, Peet discussed and contested the foundations of Pigorini's theory on the population of the South. Peet claimed that Taranto's station was in fact a terramara, but that it was the creation of a small group of migrants from Emilia who quickly assimilated into the local population. Scoglio del Tonno thus becomes a kind of 'fossil' of the terramaricoli transplanted into a different context. According to Peet, the civilization of southern Italy was influenced only by the Taranto culture and had no other connection to the Terramare culture. On the contrary, the development of the populations of the South found impetus in contacts and exchanges with Sicily and the Mediterranean world, especially with Greece and Epirus. The die was cast: Pigorini's theory was weakening in the new political context of the early 1900s. This opened the way for the reappraisal of a Mediterranean Italy, an idea supported by Sergi (who was also pro-British) and Orsi. The idea of a colonization of the Peninsula from the Mediterranean gained new ground at the beginning of the century: it gave the Italian nation a geopolitical position that moved further away from central Europe, a trend that would take shape in 1915 with the end of the alliance between Italy, Austria, and Germany. Peet's 1907 study, which would be incorporated into a famous international monograph on Italian archaeology in 1909, concluded as follows:

> The conclusion is, then, that the early Iron Age of South Italy had a different history from that of the North: it was not introduced by the Italici in person, except in the isolated case of the Tarentine district, was due only indirectly to their influence, combined with that of the Greeks (possibly of Epirus) and in some cases of the Sicilians.[67]

However, it is interesting to note at this point how the identification of the site as an authentic terramara was still considered indubitable even in 1907. This is a result of both Pigorini's influence and Quagliati's description of the location.

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66 Peet, 'The Early Iron Age in South Italy', pp. 285–86.
67 Peet, 'The Early Iron Age in South Italy', p. 296.

Treatises, drawings, and archaeological reconstructions assumed the value of scientific evidence: the documentation put together by Quagliati on which Peet based his claims was perceived as impeccable even by an archaeologist of the British School. What was being called into question were other pieces of evidence assumed by Pigorini, especially the preferred burial typology of the inhabitants of the south and the spread of ceramic types. But the Scoglio del Tonno station was considered a terramara by the international community. Quagliati's 'mistake' and Pigorini's ambition had far-reaching effects beyond the group of Italian scientists that constituted the scientific community within which they had matured.

Reshaping Scoglio del Tonno in the Fascist and Republican Era

During the fascist era, the doubts Peet and Patroni expressed were bound to gain momentum. Since 1927, the chair that had been Pigorini's had been taken over by Ugo Rellini (1870–1943).[68] Although belonging to the same generation of scholars as Quagliati (both had studied with Carducci), he was trained in the naturalistic school of Giovanni Cappellini in Bologna rather than in the archaeological one headed by Pigorini. Moreover, he arrived at archaeology at a later age after a long career as a school teacher. From the moment of his appointment as a professor of prehistory in Rome, Rellini made evident attempts to approach the leadership of the fascist national party.[69] Despite the regime's lack of interest in prehistoric archaeology, instead enthusiastically supporting classical archaeology research, Rellini's attempts bore fruit. This is probably due to Ugo Rellini's ability to combine prehistoric research more strongly than his predecessors with the theme of race, adapting it to the new political context. Rellini dedicated himself to disseminating the thesis of the origin of the Italic people and the continuity between prehistory and Roman civilization.[70] This theme, as seen, was not new at all for prehistory studies. On the contrary, it was the basis for Pigorini's theory. However, Rellini aligned himself with the new political climate and, in his works, echoed regime propaganda (*Mediterranean Civilisation and Aryan Civilisation*, Rome, 1940).[71] This certainly helped his career, making him an intellectual integrated into the regime. From 1938 on, he held an important role within the Superior Council of Demography and Race, led by Giacomo Acerbo, within which the Mediterraneanist trend found wide consensus.[72] He even collaborated

68 Tarantini, 'Appunti sui rapporti tra archeologia preistorica e fascismo'; Cultraro, 'Ugo Rellini'.
69 Cultraro, 'Ugo Rellini'.
70 Cultraro, 'Ugo Rellini'; Piasere, 'Il nuovo manifesto della razza (1942)', p. 466.
71 See Cultraro, 'Ugo Rellini'; Piasere, 'Il nuovo manifesto della razza (1942)'.
72 Piasere, 'Il nuovo manifesto della razza (1942)', pp. 463–70. See also Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, p. 296.

with the fascist journal *La Difesa della Razza* (*The Defence of the Race*),[73] in which he published an essay entitled 'Continuità della razza e della cultura primitiva in Italia' (Continuity of the Primitive Race and Culture in Italy).[74]

Although scientific theories on human prehistory remained focused on the theme of national continuity between the Neolithic and Roman eras, there was a clear change in the interpretive paradigm compared to the Liberal era. The theories, such as Pigorini's, that originated in the long nineteenth century and developed consistently with the context of nation-building were, in fact, characterized by a common invasionist paradigm. They tended to see the origin of European nations coinciding with the arrival of a civilizing migration from extra-European regions. Such migration could come from Asian-central Europe (the Aryan paradigm, to which Pigorini's theory belongs) or the Afro-Mediterranean paradigm (the Mediterraneanist paradigm, to which Giuseppe Sergi's theory belonged and, to a lesser extent, Paolo Orsi's idea). Although both paradigms found resonance in the debate on prehistory in the decades around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we have seen how the site and artefacts of Scoglio del Tonno were finally interpreted exclusively in light of Pigorini's theory. Fascism, however, provided ideological elements for a total paradigm shift. Mussolini's Italian civilization was to be characterized by the coexistence of Aryan and Mediterranean cultural elements. However, Mussolini's Mediterranean is not the same Mediterranean as that of Giuseppe Sergi and the prehistory scholars who adhered to that paradigm in the early twentieth century. The *Manifesto of Race*,[75] in fact, introduces an explicit accusation against those prehistory scholars (anthropologists and archaeologists) who, in the first decades of the century, had followed the idea of an Afro-Mediterranean prehistory. Point 8 of the *Manifesto* reads

> It is necessary to make a clear distinction between the European (Western) Mediterranean on one hand, and the Eastern and African Mediterranean on the other. The theories that support the African origin of some European peoples and include Semitic and Hamitic populations in a common

73 It was a journal, published between 1938 and 1943, dedicated to regime propaganda on the purity of the Italian race; it was filled with antisemitic and racist articles glorifying the greatness of the Italian lineage.

74 Rellini, 'Continuità della razza e della cultura primitiva in Italia'.

75 The document published on 14 July 1938, titled 'Fascism and the Issues of Race', outlines ten fundamental points that articulate the fascist stance on racial matters. In summary, the manifesto asserts the existence of human races, distinguishes between major and minor races, emphasizes the biological nature of the concept of race, claims the Aryan origin of the Italian population, and asserts the presumed purity of the Italian race. It openly advocates racism among Italians, underscores the necessity of distinguishing between Western European Mediterraneans, the Slavic peoples, and Africans, and denies the inclusion of Jews in the Italian race. Finally, it asserts the imperative to preserve unaltered the exclusively European physical and psychological traits of Italians.

> Mediterranean race, establishing absolutely unacceptable ideological relationships and sympathies, must therefore be considered dangerous.[76]

Another theme dear to the regime that allowed the overthrow of the nineteenth-century paradigm in prehistory studies was that of autochthony. According to the ideologues of Italian fascism, the Italic civilization would have been entirely of autochthonous origin, i.e., it would have originated and developed in Italy. How then did Rellini manage to introduce a Mediterranean paradigm in his research and align himself simultaneously with the regime? Scoglio del Tonno and his research in Puglia and Sicily allowed him to develop the idea that contacts between local populations and the Mediterranean East (Greece, Turkey) would have allowed the development of an original civilization. The Italian civilization would have been the work of the natives who inhabited the Italian Peninsula, in particular the central regions and the Apennines, thanks to the stimuli received from contacts with the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean.[77] Scoglio del Tonno thus assumed new importance and a new position. The Taranto station was proof of the contacts between natives and Mediterranean peoples from the East, not the outcome of colonization starting from the terramare.[78]

The ideas proposed by Rellini did not completely erase the resistance of Pigorinian origin in the Italian archaeological school, neither during fascism nor in the post-war period. After 1945, prehistoric archaeologists focused heavily on field research and data collection.[79] However, the new climate did not put an end to political readings of Italian prehistory. In this period, although the prevailing prudence and awareness matured by the war meant that no new nationalist narratives were proposed, apologetic tones began to be present in the works of some Italian archaeologists, especially those who had been trained in the fascist years. An obituary for Rellini that appeared in 1953, ten years after his passing, is a good testimony:

> According to a theory still accepted today by some sporadic scholars of classical archaeology, a people of invaders […] started from the Danube Valley […]. These inhabitants are […] the so-called 'Terramare', which this Aryan or Indo-European or Indo-Germanic people would have scattered […] down to Taranto […]. All of Italy […] would therefore have been completely invaded by this Aryan people and everything […] would have become Aryan or better yet, Germanic. To this theory […] mainly wanted by foreigners, Giovanni Patroni was the first to oppose it and then […] our Ugo Rellini. He opposed […] to these northern

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76 The manifesto is available online at the following address: https://deportati.it/archivio-storico/manifesto_razza/.

77 Rellini, *Le origini della civiltà italica*.

78 See also Cultraro, 'Uno sguardo oltre lo Stretto'.

79 Tarantini, 'Continuità, rinnovamenti, contaminazioni', p. 368.

> Terramericoli peoples, an extra-Terramarean people of Mediterranean race, continuator of the previous autochthonous Eneolithic civilisation.[80]

It is worth reporting here that the passages are cited for two reasons: 1) on the one hand they highlight the persistence of the Pigorini paradigm among classical archaeologists but not among prehistorians; 2) they testify how Rellini continued to be considered an innovator and authoritative name in Italian archaeological research during the first decade of Republican Italy, despite his close ties to the regime. In fact, from Rellini onwards, despite the interpretative paradigm shifts that occurred in various decades, the importance of Scoglio del Tonno remained constantly linked to the theme of Mediterranean exchanges between the second and first millenniua BCE. Last but not least, it should be noted that the success of the Pigorini theory after the war is subject to substantial revisionism. The Pigorini hypothesis is defined as the result of the influence of foreigners and is criticized and judged inadmissible precisely because it values the link between Italy and Germany. In the immediate post-war period, the Germans are described as responsible for scientific errors, in a way that was similar to what happened in public propaganda that aimed to distance itself from Nazism and to describe Italy as a 'victim' of Nazi barbarism. The consonance between political discourse and scientific narratives does not seem to have ended with the end of fascism. It took on new forms and accents, i.e., the rejection of any social and political co-responsibility between the Italian and German archaeological schools in the events of 1939–1945. In this way, in the 1950s, Ugo Rellini, who was involved in the construction of the fascist race theory from a Mediterranean perspective, was celebrated, just for ascribing the spread of Aryan ideology in Italy solely to German influence.

Final Considerations

The Scoglio del Tonno site is of extraordinary importance for the study of Mediterranean prehistory. Today, it is considered by archaeologists to be one of the key sites for understanding the relationships between the peoples of the Mediterranean from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. However, the modern interpretation of the finds at Scoglio del Tonno is the result of recent acquisitions. At the time of its discovery in 1899, Luigi Pigorini used it to support his theory of the unification of the Italian Peninsula in prehistoric times. In the context of nation-building, the scientific data was reshaped within Pigorini's theory, establishing a link between the unity achieved in 1861 and the pre-Roman unity, the former achieved under the sign of the Savoy monarchy, the latter following the expansion of the Terramara culture. In the dominant climate of positivism, this idea could only be effectively

80 Drago, 'Ugo Rellini e il Gargano', p. 476.

supported on the basis of scientific data. The report of Quintino Quagliati on Scoglio del Tonno was published in an authoritative forum, the *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*, the official bulletin of the Ministry of Public Education for archaeological research. Thanks to this, Pigorini himself, despite being aware of the contrasting opinion of Paolo Orsi, whose experience was much greater than that of Quintino Quagliati, did not personally visit the site, but accepted the Terramara identity in full. This was evidently because he had already been entertaining the idea of Terramaric unification for at least a decade. Quintino Quagliati, on the other hand, seemed really certain that he had found a terramara at Scoglio del Tonno. As Pigorini's student, he was in turn deeply influenced by the Terramare paradigm. Pigorini's influence on the palaeontological generation straddling the two centuries was indeed extraordinary: Pigorini's chair at the University remained the only one in Italy. Thanks to this, Pigorini built a cultural hegemony and sought to impose a scientific-identitarian paradigm. This cultural hegemony influenced the reading and interpretation of the finds from the excavation. Despite the official publication of the excavations in 1900, scientific controversy and the perplexity of a part of the Italian archaeological world continued. In 1903, the year of the 'officialization' of Pigorini's theory in its latest version, the Terramara interpretation of Scoglio del Tonno was used to attack Pigorini. However, Pigorini's auctoritas was such as to reject any accusation of falsification, a sign on the one hand of the success of Pigorini's self-promotion strategies, and on the other hand of the political importance attributed to Pigorini's theory itself in valorising local discoveries. The fact that the press deemed Taranto's discovery to be of major significance for southern Italy is proof of this. The same opinion emerges from the proceedings of the 1903 International Historical Congress: finally, the regions of the south were given a role in the historical process of national construction. However, the Pigorini theory was not the only paradigm proposed for the origin of the Italian nation: Giuseppe Sergi had advocated an idea of the mobility of ancient populations in the opposite direction, from the Mediterranean to central Europe. This made Pigorini's theory perhaps more a style of thought, linked to the Aryan myth and opposed to the Mediterranean myth, than a hegemonic scientific paradigm.

The framework of the Pigorini theory also conditioned the interpretation of scientific data and their dissemination, in the form of scientific items, in Italian museums. The data journey[81] of prehistoric artefacts in Italy was determined by the socio-political circumstances of the nation-building process (Italian nationalism) and by scientific-institutional paradigms (Pigorini's paradigm; museum paradigms). Thus, the artefacts from Scoglio del Tonno became part of the national epic in prehistoric collections in Rome and the narrative of the Terramara civilization in the Archaeology Museum of Bologna.[82]

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81 Leonelli, 'Performing Abstraction'.

82 Belardelli, *Coppa Nevigata*; Belardelli, 'Scoglio del Tonno: collezioni'.

The inclusion of these artefacts in these collections contributed to consolidating the scientific value of the items, validating the Pigorini theory, and satisfying the socio-political need to give lustre and historical legitimacy to the Italian nation.

Only in the 1930s did scientists definitively change this interpretation. Although the idea of the Terramara unity of southern Italy had already been questioned by Italian scholars (Patroni) and more authoritative foreign scholars (Peet) in the first decade of the twentieth century, the interpretation of the Scoglio del Tonno site as a Terramara station was not contested until the fascist era. In fascist Italy, a new paradigm, that of autochthony, supplanted the invasionist paradigm that had characterized prehistoric studies in Liberal Italy (1861–1915). This contributed to the reinterpretation of the Scoglio del Tonno site and its interpretation as an expression of an autochthonous and Mediterranean civilization. Ugo Rellini was the architect of this paradigm shift. Rellini, however, was also a supporter of the regime's racial ideology.[83] Despite this, after the war, Rellini was celebrated[84] because his theory allowed Italian archaeologists to definitively rid themselves of the Aryan ideology and to attribute the Pigorini interpretation of national prehistory solely to German interference. In this way, archaeologists trained under fascism aligned themselves with the political discourse that saw fascist racism as a product of Nazi political influence, but not as part of Italian national culture.

From these events, it becomes evident how an archaeological site and its artefacts provided data to support opposing theories on the origin of the Italian nation and the process of civilization and exchange between peoples in prehistory. It was the political climate (and its changing) that co-produced the success of different scientific paradigms. Power dynamics and interpretive paradigms that are distinct from and complementary to those that populate the history of science in other disciplines conditioned the interpretation of the Scoglio del Tonno site and artefacts.[85] In this case, in fact, it was not a paradigm that prevented the 'vision' of a particular aspect of nature. On the contrary, Quagliati, precisely thanks to the action of a pervasive interpretive paradigm such as the Pigorini theory, ended up identifying a terramara where there was none. This had enormous consequences for the development of archaeological science, not only in Italy, because the interpretation offered by Quagliati and Pigorini became dominant internationally. For this reason, Scoglio del Tonno represents a central case study in the history of Italian archaeology. It is also an exemplary case study of the historical-geographical mobility of meanings attributed to objects and scientific data, also based on different socio-political

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83 Cultraro, 'Ugo Rellini'.

84 See Drago, 'Ugo Rellini e il Gargano'.

85 Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; Kuhn, *The Last Writings of Thomas S. Kuhn*; Gramsci, *Quaderni dal Carcere*; see also Badino and Omodeo 'For Gramsci: Hegemony in the History and Philosophy of Science', pp. 1–18. Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*.

contexts (reshaping). Finally, it presents a case study that shows the process of museumization of artefacts far from the context of discovery, allowing us to identify the scientific, socio-political, and self-promotion strategies of individuals that lead to the mobilization of collections and individual items, thus producing historically and geographically marked forms of knowledge.

ABSTRACT This article re-evaluates the historical narrative of the archaeological site known as 'Scoglio del Tonno' in Taranto, challenging the simplistic portrayal of early twentieth-century Italian archaeologists as incompetent or malicious. Particularly, it reassesses the case study from a different perspective, starting with the concept of scientific paradigms and communities and reconstructing the data journey of scientific remains. The objective is to unravel the intricate interplay between science and politics in Italy within diverse socio-political contexts: the Italian Kingdom, Fascist Italy, and the early Republican era. By delving into the historical context, the article elucidates how socio-political constraints shaped the scientific interpretation. Furthermore, it scrutinizes the transfer of archaeological findings to other museums: the historical analysis reveals dynamic scientific paradigms influencing the relocation of findings and modifying their social and political implications.

KEYWORDS Data Journey; Scientific Paradigms; Scientific Communities; Science and Politics; Reshaping Archaeological Objects

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